

# COMM UNIVERSITY

SPRING 2020



Discovering Communication Abroad

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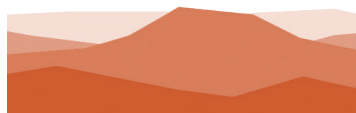
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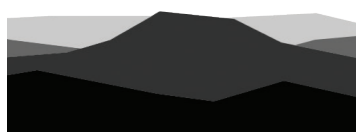
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# Director's report 2019-2020

The theme of this year's CommUNO is Discovering Communication Abroad.

Communication across the world has long been a focus of the School of Communication. We offer two courses, Intercultural Communication in the Global Workplace and Global Communication, that focus directly on this topic. Several other journalism classes, including advertising, public relations and social media courses, feature global communication as part of the curriculum.

For more than two decades Chris Allen, Ph.D., as the culmination of his Global Communication class, has led students to London to get an up-close glimpse of how the mass media works worldwide. Some of the places the students visit include international advertising agencies, the Islam Network, the BBC and a couple of London's largest newspapers. As a prestigious Fulbright Scholar, Allen is uniquely qualified to teach this class. He has traveled extensively in Europe and Asia, including a yearlong stint teaching at Oman's Sultan Qaboos University.

There is a long tradition of School of Communication professors and global communication. We have three current faculty members who are international scholars: Joy Chao, Ph.D., from Taiwan, Roma Subramanian, Ph.D., from India and Nicky Bi, Ph.D., from China. Professor Emeritus Bruce Johansen was invited to be a keynote speaker at conferences in Poland and India.

We recently completed a multi-year, multimillion-dollar education grant from the U.S. State Department. Several faculty members: Allen, Ana Cruz, Ph.D., Adam Tyma, Ph.D., Andrea Weare, Ph.D., Professor Hugh Reilly and Lecturers Holly Miller, Abbie Syrek, Herb Thompson and Cameron Logsdon worked with faculty from Kabul University and Balkh University in Afghanistan to help them create Communication Studies departments in their universities. They are now the only Communication Studies departments in all of Asia.

Jeremy Lipschultz, Ph.D., Sherrie Wilson, Ph.D., Allen, Reilly and Lecturers Gary Repair and Mark Dail also worked on an earlier grant to help Kabul University improve its



**Professor Hugh Reilly**

journalism curriculum. Lecturers Syrek and Logsdon have traveled to China to help students there with Public Speaking.

Our faculty have led multiple student groups to England and Ireland. They have traveled to, or worked with, international colleagues in Afghanistan, China, India, Poland, Dubai, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, England and Ireland.

If you are interested in the world around you, UNO's School of Communication is a good place to start. You'll never know the places you'll go or the people you'll meet.

## Fall 2019 CommUNO team



**Bottom Row:** Sam Weideman, Karissa Madrigal, Kathy Nguyen, Alyse Mancino, Katheryn Lopez-Chavez

**Top Row:** Megan Schneider, Elle Love, Rae Wesley-Powell, Latea Glenn

## Spring 2020 CommUNO team



**Bottom Row:** Natasha McCallister, Elizabeth Rollin, Cait Morrissey, Mikayla Dyell, Sam Weideman, Alyse Mancino

**Top Row:** Justin Kies, Jimmy Carroll, Faith Johnson, Jake DiMauro, Callie Zeorian, Blake Pfeil, Hannah Asbury, Jack Delperdang, Leta Lohmeyer, Kieran Carter, Claire Redinger (Not pictured: Dani Apperson)

## About this issue and cover

By Faith Johnson

CommUNO has shown nothing short of excellence over the years, winning multiple awards on a yearly basis.

CommUNO recently received two 2019 Paper Anvil Awards from the Public Relations Society of America Nebraska chapter and is known for highlighting the power of communication. This year's publication came with a new twist and theme: Discovering Communication Abroad.

While the 2019 spring class PR and Advertising Capstone students brainstormed the theme for this year's publication, they reached out to alumni asking for their travel stories, and saw a great response.

"We were hearing these stories from alumni, sharing how they were using communication skills all over the world," says Melodae Morris, APR, SHRM-SCP, School of Communication lecturer and CommUNO adviser.

The greatest goal of this year's publication, now being produced by Morris' Magazine, Editing, Design and Production class, with the help of Karen Weber's Magazine Writing Class, is to broaden the way the CommUNO connects with alumni.

Since 2018, Morris says, "The publication has been sent out to alumni via email, which made a large impact in gathering information, especially about their stories of adventure all over the world."

In addition, Morris says School of Communication students travel abroad each year.

"In the stories in this issue you see the power of learning about one another's cultures, lives and experiences," Morris says, "People can communicate through something as simple as sitting around a table and exploring new foods together."

We hope you enjoy the journey of traveling over the world through this year's publication and you will be inspired to embark on new conversations and new experiences.



**Cover design by Alyse Mancino and Latea Glenn.**

## From the Editor: Adapting the CommUNO to a new reality



**Melodae Morris, APR, SHRM-SCP, lecturer, CommUNO editor-in-chief and adviser. Photo by Naomi Yanike**

Producing the 2020 CommUNO is presenting some unique challenges.

At this writing, shortly before we go to press, all of us in the world are facing the everyday challenges of adapting to a new reality dubbed as “social distancing” along with the vast and various other concerns.

On Thursday, March 12, at 2 p.m., the Magazine Editing, Design and Product class of 18 students gathered around the table in the Arts and Sciences building, 110 computer lab room, on the University of Nebraska at Omaha campus for the regular CommUNO editorial meeting.

Student cell phones began to light up as the first announcement from University of Nebraska at Omaha, Chancellor Jeffrey Gold, M.D., about the Coronavirus (COVID-19) resulting in the closing of UNO for an early spring break. The room erupted in the chatter of students with questions and general discussion about classes moving to an online delivery format. This same scenario was playing out all over the campus.

We immediately turned our discussion to how we would continue to produce the magazine going forward. The next draft of the publication was quickly printed out so that it could meet with another round of proofreading. As class ended, students said their in-person goodbyes, and some of the last students out of the classroom, gave each other double elbow bumps.

At this writing, we are adapting. Students are working remotely in their teams: editing, design, photography and digital. Each week, we plan to have our editorial meetings via Zoom conferencing. That’s adapting.

One of the assignments these students had was to come up with the theme for our 2021 publication. We had already anticipated that the coming months would produce a host of newsworthy items of how alumni, faculty, students and more would have to change their lives and how they connect to the world. The 2021 CommUNO theme chosen by students is: “Adapting Through Communication.”

**We will be reaching out to you in the coming months for you to share your stories of adapting to crisis, connecting in your community to serve others and your creativity in how you communicated during this time.**

Other adapting for this publication is occurring as we review our stories about events that were canceled or postponed. Some alumni are coming home after being in other parts of the world. Some students and staff can’t travel home to their home countries. Story revisions are in order.

The Public Relations Society of American issued information to PR professionals with reminders to:

- Be transparent. Respect builds and reinforces credibility.
- Be truthful. Honesty is fundamental to gaining and maintaining public trust.
- Be timely. Establish a sound and regular communication path as the authentic and accurate source.

These are standard guidelines, among other best practices, that we strive for across our curriculums in the School of Communication. Thus, the purpose of this writing is to let you know that we are in-tune to you and wish you the best during this unusual time in our history.

*Melodae Morris*



# Constitution Week engaged students in a variety of events

By Jimmy Carroll

Constitution Week is celebrated annually on campus in September with events such as those observing Constitution Day or “Citizenship Day” commemorating the awareness of the signed document of rights given to U.S. citizens.

Barbara Pickering, Ph.D., professor in the University of Nebraska at Omaha School of Communication, has coordinated Constitution Week at UNO for five years.

“Constitution Day is a federally designated day and we do multiple events during the week,” Pickering says. “It is the best way to commemorate the special day in this country.”

Constitution Week celebrated 100 years of women fighting for their right to vote-the 19th Amendment. The keynote speaker for the historical event was Dr. Dianne Bystrom, director emerita of the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics at Iowa State University. She presented an in-depth overview of the importance of women’s voting.

Pickering says over 50 people attended the event, including staff, students and the public.

The League of Women Voters had voter registration booths on campus, resulting in over 20 newly registered voters.

A First Amendment Panel took place in the College of Public Affairs and Community Service commons area. School of Communication Professor Jeremy Lipschultz, Ph.D., hosted the panel including Michael Holmes, Amy Miller, Jody Neathery-



**Professor Jeremy Lipschultz, Ph.D., moderates the First Amendment panel during Constitution Week. Photo submitted.**

Castro and Michael J. O’Hara. The panel discussed the entirety of the First Amendment, specifically free speech and threats to freedom of the press.

Lipschultz gave students an opportunity to participate in #UNO1ForAll on social media, a competition on Instagram and Twitter to promote the First Amendment. Students live-tweeted during the event to learn more from the panelists.

## Launching into the future: Maverick Digital Network

By Kieran Carter

Inside of the University of Nebraska at Omaha television studio a revolution into digital content is in its early stages.

Chris Allen, Ph.D., UNO TV general manager and School of Communication professor is overseeing the revolution from traditional distribution to UNO’s very own content platform, Maverick Digital Network. It includes live streams of sporting events, lectures and many more events important to UNO and the Omaha community.

MDN had its soft opening in 2019 with a slate of four hockey games of the 2019-2020 season. Footage of the games from Baxter Arena were streamed through the network with students producing the pregame, intermission and post-game coverage of the games.

Allen says the content that has been produced is high quality and has given a boost to the ideas of what all the network could do.

“The programs that we’ve done are a stunning success, I wish we had announced to the world that we were doing this,” Allen says.

This success has led to Allen and the brain trust around MDN to plan for a massive jump in content for 2020 and 2021 by covering all home hockey and basketball games. In addition, Allen foresees



**The second ever broadcast on the Maverick Digital Network featured hosts Ana Bellinghausen (left), Matt Kinkle (middle) and Owen Godbersson (right) for the Maverick hockey game versus Miami University (OH) on Nov. 23, 2019. Photo by Jodeane Brownlee.**

the live stream graduations and guest lectures at UNO. The future of the MDN is bright, he says, thanks to all those working hard on programing and planning and especially the students.

See “UNO rolls out student-led broadcast with new opportunities” for more about student MDN work on page 39.

# School of Communication graduate program creates space for growth

By Claire Redinger

The School of Communication graduate program has welcomed changes in the past six years under the leadership of program chair Adam Tyma, Ph.D.

For one, “I moved offices – this one has a window,” Tyma says.

The physical changes in Arts and Sciences Hall are reminiscent of the graduate program as a whole—changes have been made to create more space: the program requires an equal 33 hours for both the thesis and project option; the GRE is no longer required; students can apply for several funded graduate teaching positions; many classes are available online; and graduate certificates are available in Technical Communication, Human Resources and Training; and Communication, a new certificate added in the fall of 2019.

Recruiting for the graduate program has its challenges, Tyma says, but he has also seen a master’s degree become “almost a necessity,” a way for individuals to set themselves apart in a sea of bachelor’s degrees.



**Assistant Professor Andrea Weare, Ph.D., teaches a graduate course in a small-group setting. Photo submitted.**

“It’s become more and more ‘how do we put ourselves up as employees,’” Tyma says. “And, we still work with both the future professor in mind and the future professional.”

For the professional, graduate certificates, requiring 18 credit hours, allow employees to enhance their knowledge, sharpen their skills and stand out in their workplace. An added benefit, Tyma says, is that employers will often pay for their employees to go through the program. As students go through the graduate program – whether to receive a certificate or a degree – they change both professionally and personally, he says.

“We ask some pretty tough questions at the graduate level—you figure out who you are in that space,” Tyma says.

## MavSocial Media helps students and local communities

By Liz Rollin

At the University of Nebraska at Omaha Social Media Lab for Research and Engagement, students and professors work together with local communities in conjunction with MavSocial Media to implement social media leverage.

Professor Jeremy Lipschultz, Ph. D. says the lab is used for the specific needs of the UNO community whether it be downtown economic development, event promotion or increasing community engagement.

Social Media and Management evolved out of an earlier class that developed out of the need to study social media metrics back

when Twitter and Facebook were new, Lipschultz says. Systematic methods were developed and the student firm Maverick Social Media was created. Students today become involved through the current course now taught by Lipschultz.

MavSocial Media has worked with the Rural Futures Institute the past few years and recently received a grant to do work with additional communities going forward. Lipschultz says that the three communities they’ve been working with have been Ashland, Nebraska City and Ravenna.

“We’ve let them tell us their needs and then we, based on our knowledge of social media sites and approaches, develop things like content calendars and sample posts,” Lipschultz says.

The class Social Media and Management will be offered twice in 2021 both spring and fall to focus further on what these communities identify as their top priorities and needs.

“Every time we go through this experience we learn, the people we’re working for learn, and the students learn, and we build knowledge capacity in the UNO Social Media Lab,” Lipschultz says.



**MavSocial Media students and other students engaged with social media in various events and presentations during the 2019-2020 academic year.**



# Honey, I shrunk the teacher! UNO's School of Communication feels push to move online

By Jake DiMauro

From “Carmen Sandiego” on a computer lab floppy disc, to “Bill Nye the Science Guy” on a massive mobile TV, education has been trending toward going online for decades.

Universities, traditionally defined by their lectures, labs and libraries, have perhaps experienced the most substantial changes brought on by the digital age.

Hugh Reilly, professor and director of the School of Communication, is no stranger to this new paradigm. In fact, he says he has been at the helm of transitioning one of the country's top speech programs, Communication Studies 1110, to nearly 20 online sections.

“We’ve been judicious in selecting the courses that we allow to be taught online, with the exception of Comm Studies 1110. That was the only way we could meet the goals we were given – to go online,” Reilly says.

He notes the school's desire to be more accessible to distance

## Students visit the Capital of Europe

By Mikayla Dyell

Global Media Communication in the United Kingdom is a faculty-led program that is designed by Chris Allen, Ph.D., a professor in the School of Communication.

It was started in 2000 and since then he has led this adventure 18 times. This trip is 15 days in May that combines academic and cultural visits. The class is limited to 15 students, and the cost is part of the class fees for the travel section of Global Media Communication.

Allen says he chose London as the destination because it is known as the capital of Europe and has no language barrier.

Students visit large media outlets such as the Telegraph, the Time, McCann Advertising and the Internal Press Standard Organization. Allen says touring these allow students to gain insight into what a career in journalism and advertising would look like and how outlets work on a global level.

“I try to pick places where people that are there can talk about what they do, how they do it, and what their outlook is globally,” Allen says.

The course exposes students to media-related industries and students gain a passion for traveling. He says it is important to give



**UNO School of Communication students experience the university's gradual push to put classes online. Photo by Liz Rollin.**

learners, as well as more flexible for local UNO students as reasons for the big push to go online.

He warns, however, that although the change is convenient for many students, it may not always be the best option.

“The single-most important quality needed to be successful in an online class is self-discipline,” Reilly says. “It's easy to fall behind.”

Though the days of lining up single-file on your way to the computer lab are behind you, your journey with online classes likely is not. Whether or not these classes are beneficial, though, is for you to decide, he says.



**The 2019 Global Communication class visited the Buckingham Palace. Top row (left to right): Abbie Perry, Celeste Barron-Nicoletti. Middle row (left to right): Anna Morton, Kamrin Baker, Okina Tran, Bryan Vomacka, Brooke Wegner, Leta Lohrmeyer, Abby Lehmer. Front row (left to right): Katie Elfering, Sarah Elfering, Chris Allen, Katie Zimmerer, Sadiya Xasan. Photo submitted.**

students to a more global view of the media as well as develop a global curiosity and the ability to not be afraid to travel around the world.

“Students begin to develop a global awareness and appreciation for a country and appreciation for what other countries have,” Allen says. “By talking to people from other countries, you discover things about yourself, your country and the world that you did not realize.”

Professor, Chris Allen, Ph.D., planned on taking a new group to London in 2020; however, the trip was canceled due to the Covid-19 virus, as UNO made that decision in March.



# UNO alumna translates travel and studies to work and art

By Alyssa Siebken

When Kelly Bast decided to take a leap and book the 3,728-mile trip to Peru in 2014, she says she didn't realize the greater impact her travels and experiences would soon hold.

The Spanish language has enamored Bast since seventh grade, regardless of any pronunciation struggles or difficult instructors. So, when Bast had the opportunity to fully immerse herself in the culture, Bast says she knew South America was the destination for her.

"I wanted something more rural or, you know, completely different and to see the world," Bast says. "So, in part, I had always loved studying the Aztec or the Inca cultures in school, and Machu Picchu in Peru always stood out to me."

Through the University of Nebraska at Omaha's International Studies program, Bast studied at the Universidad del Pacífico in Lima, Peru. While earning credit toward her minor, Bast enrolled in undergraduate courses with locals and was instructed entirely in Spanish for 16 weeks. Bast graduated magna cum laude from UNO in May 2016 with a Bachelor of Arts in communication, majoring in journalism, with a concentration in public relations and advertising and a minor in Spanish.

Bast was also significantly involved on campus within various student-run programs such as UNO's chapter of Public Relations Student Society of America, MaverickPR and The Gateway newspaper. Her work within these organizations, as well as the UNO Alumni Association, Bast says led to her current position as brand and communications coordinator at Emspace + Lovgren.

"It was exactly what I was looking for," Bast says. "After my experience with Maverick PR, I liked the idea of working for a small agency, where it is kind of all hands on deck, and just that smaller connection."

Emspace + Lovgren is a full-service communications agency unlike any other traditional ad agency, public relations firm or design studio she says. Emspace + Lovgren is a relatively small company that works primarily with nonprofit organizations, which Bast considers one of her favorite aspects of the company.

Bast says she feels fortunate to have landed her title as brand and communications coordinator almost immediately after graduation. It is a "catch-all position" that allows her to exercise her college education and experience in many aspects. She mainly handles social media strategies, proposals, copywriting and editing projects.

Not only is Bast the only Spanish-speaking employee in the building, but she also knows her way around Adobe programs and has a knack for editing. So much, in fact, that she says she has earned a clever nickname around the office as "Eagle Eye" or, more specifically, "Kelly Eye."

After three years working at Emspace + Lovgren, Bast says she appreciates how seamlessly the company has married both her degrees and passions.

**"Traveling has a way of expanding your worldview—whether you're going to a new city or a new country."  
-Kelly Bast**

"I think it's just the team here. It's fun being able to work and see all parts of the process," Bast says. "Even if I don't work specifically on a project, it will kind of pass through everyone's hands at least once."



**Kelly Bast says she has experienced no shortage of artistic inspiration in Peru, "It's such a wild country because it has everything." Photo submitted.**

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Outside of the creative place that is Emspace + Lovgren, Bast also enjoys spending time with her art. She often finds herself sketching and drawing portraits inspired by different people, places and things. However, one particular muse doesn't feel so random, she says.

"Normally, when I'm drawing, I draw one thing and then I'm done and I move on," she says, "but Peru has been a recurring theme. It's such a wild country because it has everything. You have the city, like Lima, which holds 10 million people. Then, you're right on the coast and the beach and the ocean. You have the Amazon Jungle. There is this oasis in the desert. The glaciers. The mountains."

Recently, Bast expressed her admiration for Peruvian culture at the Midtown Chalk Art Festival, where she drew inspiration from her travels to create a vibrant chalk piece of a llama s he encountered.

While Bast plans to expand her explorations throughout the world and its wonders, she says she is grateful for the experiences and memories made during her college career and studies abroad, which eventually led to her current endeavors.

"Traveling has a way of expanding your worldview—whether you're going to a new city or a new country," Bast says. "You usually don't realize it until you're back home, but the experiences and memories tend to stick around long after."



"Traveling has a way of expanding your world view, whether you're going to a new city or a new country," Bast says. Photo submitted.



# Gaining a global perspective: Ravyn Daniel's travels with faith

By Alex Graff

God's love takes people a lot of places and it took Ravyn Daniel farther than most.

She has been to four different continents and six different countries and has found God's love everywhere she visited.

"The biggest thing was experiencing God's love and how much He cares about me," she says.

Daniel, a May 2019 University of Nebraska at Omaha School of Communication graduate, started her travels in 2017 with a two-week long mission trip to Pretoria, South Africa.

Daniel helped teach life skills and how to get a job to the people of South Africa. She also taught them spirituality and how to express themselves. South Africa only recently did away with apartheid and Daniel says she saw first-hand the effects it still had on residents.

"A black woman wouldn't even look me in the eyes because I was white and that would have been a sign of disrespect in their society," Daniel says.

She says this trip opened her eyes to the freedoms that we take for advantage here in the U.S.

"I learned just as much as I taught," Daniel says.

Daniel's next excursion abroad was to Cusco, Peru, where she studied Spanish.

"It was the most amazing experience of my entire life," Daniel says.

She studied with other international students and lived with a host family.

"This was my longest trip abroad and the immersion was amazing," Daniel says.

In the summer of 2019, Daniel won a scholarship to travel to Israel through Covenant Journey. This was a life changing trip, because as a devout Christian whose faith has helped carry her in her journey, Daniel says she got to see the Bible come to life before her eyes.

"I've spent my entire life reading those Bible stories and being able to go to Israel and see these places talked about in the Bible with my own eyes was life changing," Daniel says. "We were playing and doing back flips in the same Sea of Galilee where Jesus walked on water; it was so cool!"



**Ravyn Daniel in Pretoria, South Africa, with students she taught important life skills, spirituality and how to express themselves. Photo submitted.**

Daniel says she has no doubts in her faith, but being able to visit the places where miracles happened let her feel God's love in a way that no other place on earth could.

Daniel's most recent trip was a family vacation to Praiano, Italy.

"It was so different and I loved it," Daniel says. "We visited the ruins of Pompeii and stayed off the Amalfi coast."

**"I've spent my entire  
life reading those Bible  
stories and being able to  
go to Israel and see these  
places talked about in the  
Bible with my own eyes  
was life changing."  
-Ravyn Daniel**

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After all her travels and graduating from college, Daniel decided to stay close and now works at Providence Church, located on the UNO's campus.

Daniel says she loves her job but says: "It's like a three-person job in one. I don't get much sleep, but I love my work."

Her official title is serving teams, events and communications coordinator. She handles the church's social media communication and coordinates volunteers and events.

"God taught me how much He loves and cares about me," says Daniel, looking back on her journey.

The experiences that she had while helping people in South Africa and studying in Peru, she says, opened her world view and showed her different cultures that she would have never even known about otherwise.

"Traveling has helped me understand that everyone has a different back ground and different experiences." Daniel says. "It has allowed me to look at a situation with a more global context."

Daniel says she recommends traveling abroad to anyone who has the option. It may not change your life as much as it changed hers, but you will always learn something. The world is a giant place filled with God's love, you just need to take the first step and find it.

Daniel's final advice: "If you are a junior and you haven't studied abroad you need to get your butt on a plane and get out of the country," she says.



**Daniel experiences the local culture and people out and about on the streets of Cusco, Peru. Photo submitted.**



**Daniel boards the plane to her next excursion in Cusco, Peru to study the Spanish language. Photo submitted.**





In her public school, Hoffer teaches six third- and fourth-grade classes, with 40 students in each. Photo submitted.

## Alumna immerses herself in Chinese culture while teaching children English

By Rachel Polanco

Mackenzie Hoffer says she knew she wanted to explore the world after she graduated from college.

Her journey has brought her to Beijing City, China where she teaches English to grade-school children.

"In school, I always enjoyed communications and writing," Hoffer says.

During her time at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, she did copy writing and graphic design for MaverickPR, the student-run public relations firm. Before graduating from UNO with a Bachelor of Science in communication in 2017, Hoffer dreamed of joining the Peace Corps.

"Peace Corps didn't work out because I didn't have enough experience in teaching," Hoffer says. "It was one of the reasons I thought to go to China to gain some experience."

Six months after graduation, Hoffer embarked on her journey to Beijing City, China. However, Hoffer says she did not expect to be a teacher, let alone to be 6,469 miles away teaching English to third- and fourth- graders.

Now living in Beijing City, China, Hoffer became acquainted with the worldwide company called EF through her parents who hosted foreign exchange students.

EF stands for English First, an advanced English learning program that uses a combination of self-study and face-to-face lessons. According to the EF Education First website, Hoffer found that China is a very competitive country that controls the level of education based on standardized testing. How dynamic the schools were and everyone's different levels in education impacted her.

"Not everybody needs to speak English," Hoffer says.

In her new environment, Hoffer wanted to create an experience for her students.

Hoffer taught in a private school when she first arrived in China. The classes consisted of third- and fourth= graders and some high school students. She would teach 10 to 15 students in one class.

Today, Hoffer teaches in a public school. She explained that these classes are much larger than those taught in private school.

In public school, she teaches six third grade classes and six fourth grade classes with 40 students in each.

When Hoffer isn't teaching English, she spends her free time doing activities like camping. Not just any type of camping though.

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She had the opportunity to camp on The Great Wall. Hoffer says she, her friend and her dog spent a night on The Great Wall in one of the towers in a secluded area. This adventure was made possible due to her friend's acquaintance.

"The views were amazing," Hoffer says.

## **Six months after graduation, Hoffer embarked on her journey to Beijing City, China. However, Hoffer says she did not expect to be a teacher. -Mackenzie Hoffer**

Hoffer is also a "self-proclaimed" food critic. She has enjoyed trying new dishes and spices unique to China. She says she tried chicken feet for the first time and they were "decent."

However, it does not compare to the Jianbing, a dish similar to crepes.

"I love crepes," Hoffer says.

As delicious as the food in China is and as exhilarating camping on The Great Wall of China may have been, she misses home.

"China has amazing food, but nothing compares to family cooking and the flavors of home," Hoffer says.

Hoffer's road to success has been an incredible journey thus far. She cherishes the time she spent at UNO. Once she found her home in the communications field, Hoffer says she, "enjoyed the sense of community the most."

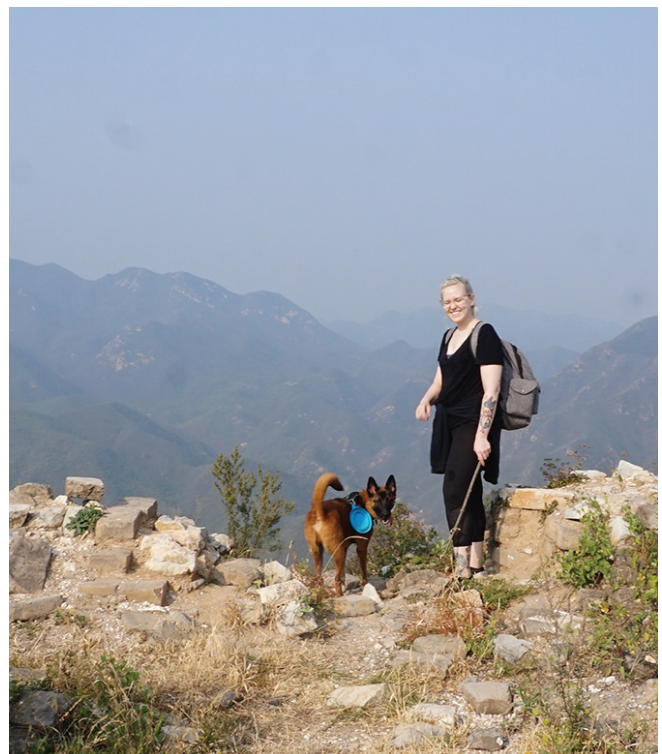
"I have so much love for UNO and my experience there," she says.

In order to join the Peace Corps, Hoffer traveled to China to gain more experience teaching English but now her plans have changed.

"I don't know if it's exactly what I want anymore but I would never rule it out," Hoffer says. "I'm a go with the flow type of person so I would say it's still a possibility."



**In Hoffer's new environment, she wanted to create an experience for her students. Photo submitted.**



**Hoffer and her dog Bruce stand on The Great Wall, where they had the opportunity to camp with a friend. Photo submitted.**



# UNO alumna runs around the globe as Slovenian Olympic track star

By Kamrin Baker

Maja Mihalinec is ready for the sprint of her life.

The 2013 UNO graduate is a member of the women's Slovenian track and field team, and some would say she runs the world.

The track and field star, originally from Slovenia, came to the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 2008 to pursue her degrees in communication with an emphasis in public relations and Spanish.

Recruited by Steve Smith, UNO's track coach at the time, she made waves and records at the university.

Her specialties are the 60, 100 and 200-meter dashes, and she has the stats to prove it.

Mihalinec holds the UNO record for the indoor 60-meter dash at 7.49 seconds, and she competed in the 200-meter dash at the 2016 Olympics in Rio.

After a recent 12th-place semifinal finish in the International Association of Athletics Federation World Championship in Dohar, Qatar—a career best—she says she is ready to hit the ground running.



Mihalinec says her first Olympic experience was overwhelming, and it took time adjusting to being surrounded by so many sports celebrities.

**“I am very grateful  
for my track career  
because it has allowed  
me to travel so much.”  
-Maja Milhalinec**

Mihalinec has athleticism running through her veins.

Both of her parents were semi-professional volleyball players, and her sister Katja plays volleyball in the highest national league in Slovenia.

Mihalinec says she and her sister were brought up with sports as a way of life.

“That definitely helped us to become successful athletes,” Mihalinec says. “My family and my extended family are definitely still my biggest cheerleaders.”

She takes all the support she can get. Her regular competition training experience is grueling—and tropical.

With the rest of the Slovenian track team, she practices her warm-ups, sprints and weight training on the Canary Islands off the coast of Spain.

Mihalinec was in Greece during her Skype interview, her face peeking through the darkness of an early morning drive to Mikonos beside her fiancé, Luka Zida.

She rattled off a list of her favorite places: Rio de Janeiro, the Great Wall of China, New York City and Hawaii.

“I am very grateful for my track career because it has allowed me to travel so much,” Mihalinec says. “I also won a gold medal in the European Games this year, so there have been a lot of big milestones for me.”

**Mihalinec holds the UNO record for the indoor 60-meter dash at 7.49 seconds, and she competed in the 200-meter dash at the 2016 Olympics in Rio. Photo submitted.**

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Before Mihalinec was a world-renowned athlete, she was distinguished in her Omaha community as a UNO athlete and student.

Her studies in public relations, involvement as the director of the campus's student-run PR firm, MaverickPR, and her commitment to athletics led her to a job with the Slovenian Armed Forces as a communications assistant.

"The Slovenian Armed Forces is kind of the nation's way of supporting athletes and giving us employment while we focus on our training and traveling," she says. "There are many differences between the States and Slovenia. It's just the lifestyle. There is a lot more travel time and vacation time in everyone's schedules here."

The travel-train-repeat schedule remains in the foreground for Mihalinec at the moment, but she says she uses her many communication skills to her benefit now, as she builds and maintains a personal brand, acting like her own one-woman PR firm.

"I know how to hold good conversations, keep myself in the media and keep myself relevant," Mihalinec says. "A lot of it is the opportunity we have with social media and tell my story and what I do on a daily basis. That's been a huge priority."

Besides the envy-inducing travel photos on her Instagram and brand ambassadorships with companies like VitaminWell water, Mihalinec communicates with the press directly before and after every major competition.

Mihalinec plans to keep training for the Tokyo Olympics, postponed to 2021 due to the global pandemic.

Whether it's the competitive success or nailing a news conference, Mihalinec doesn't seem to have a single regret.

"It was a huge experience to travel to the U.S. for five years and experience the culture as a student," Mihalinec says. "I've seen a lot of the world already, and I am just so grateful."



**Mihalinec climbs the stairs at Escadaria Selarón in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Photo submitted.**



**After a recent 12th-place semifinal finish in the International Association of Athletics Federation World Championship in Doha, Qatar—a career best—Maja Mihalinec (pictured) says she is ready to hit the ground running. She plans to compete in the next Olympic Games. Photo submitted.**



# Beyond blessed: Sam Murphy brings his best to baseball and beyond

By Jacob Thimjon

Sam Murphy's life has always revolved around sports.

When he was a child, Murphy's parents signed him up for whatever sport was in season.

"Eventually, they must've figured out baseball was king for me," Murphy says.

When he was growing up in Lake Worth, Florida, Murphy's family moved around the country for their jobs, giving Murphy the opportunity for adventures.

Murphy says growing up his family took what they called a "baseball road trip" every summer to visit different Major League Baseball stadiums across the country. To date, Murphy has visited 27 of the 32 MLB stadiums.

Murphy lettered in baseball all four years at Summit Christian High School in Florida as a pitcher and position player. He was also the public address announcer for the Summit Christian basketball teams, where Murphy says he began to have an interest in sportscasting.

In high school, Murphy would record himself calling games and listen to his recordings. He says the process helped him prepare for a career in sportscasting.

After graduating valedictorian of his class in 2012, Murphy attended the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Murphy says experiencing college outside of Florida and playing baseball close to family, while studying in a good broadcasting and journalism program prompted him to become a Maverick. Murphy was team captain as a left-handed pitcher and first

baseman for the UNO baseball team and received multiple Summit League academic awards during his career.

Off the diamond, Murphy was a play-by-play announcer and anchor for MavRadio, interned with the UNO Athletic Department, and hosted a radio show called "Murph in the Morning."

"It was all good for my experience," Murphy says, "the possibilities were endless."

**Covering sporting events  
and managing social  
media accounts helped  
him learn how to be  
successful in the industry  
and express his voice in  
creative ways to  
intrigue others.  
-Sam Murphy**



As an ambassador, Murphy coaches 7- to 16-year-olds teaching them fundamentals of the game of baseball. Photo submitted.

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Murphy graduated from UNO with a bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism in 2016, and a bachelor's in general administration in 2017.

However, following his baseball career at UNO, Murphy says he wanted to play baseball and experience the world.

UNO head baseball coach Evan Porter encouraged Murphy to play overseas after his collegiate career. Murphy says playing baseball internationally was always on his mind and eventually an opportunity arose for him to play in Austria.

Murphy and others are ambassadors for the Feldrick Cardinals of the Austrian Baseball Federation.

As an ambassador, Murphy coaches 7- to- 16-year-olds teaching them baseball fundamentals. Murphy also participates in school projects in Austria, where teams go to local schools and cities across the country to play baseball with children.

"Our goal is to get them excited and passionate about the game," Murphy says.

Murphy plays in Austria during the winter, but currently is in his first season as an outfielder and pitcher for the Rockingham Rams of the Baseball Western Australian League, where he plays during the summer.

"When you play baseball year-round, you're gonna have an advantage over places that can only play during certain months," Murphy says.

Away from the diamond, Murphy has worked sporting events as a social media intern. Murphy's events include March Madness, the Miami Beach Bowl, The College World Series, the Olympic Swim Trials, the College Football National Semifinals and the College Football National Championship.

Murphy covered fan access, live music performances and press conferences from players and coaches on social media, before, during and after the games. Murphy also managed social media accounts for the Tampa Bay Lightning of the National Hockey League and the Los Angeles Chargers of the National Football League.

Covering sporting events and managing social media accounts Murphy says, helped him learn how to be successful in the industry and express his voice in creative ways to intrigue others.

"You have to find a way to appeal to the masses, one size doesn't fit all," Murphy says.

Murphy says he hopes to one day work a Super Bowl and an Olympic Games, he says, but wants to pursue a career in sportscasting after he's finished playing baseball.

Although Murphy's days are jam-packed with baseball and social media, Murphy says motivation and passion are what drives him every day.

"I'm the guy who always wants to do something," Murphy says. "I just want to be the best I can be."



"I'm the guy who always wants to do something," Murphy says. "I just want to be the best I can be." Photo submitted.



Rock takes photos of wildlife, landscapes and people, showing his audiences exactly what lives in the watery world around them. Photo submitted.

## The double blue yonder: The art and thoughts of Tim Rock

By Jared Barton

The earth's surface is 71% covered in water.

Approximately 5% of that water has been explored. The ocean is one of human's last true unexplored frontiers.

Tim Rock, a 1974 graduate of the University of Nebraska at Omaha and a photojournalist based in the Western Pacific, brings that unexplored frontier to life for anyone with an internet connection.

Rock takes photos of wildlife, landscapes and people, showing his audiences exactly what lives in the world around them. More specifically, he works out of Guam.

Guam, a small Pacific island, sits approximately 7,000 miles from the mainland United States. The U.S. territory boasts large quantities of tourists, tropical adventures, and the accompanying balmy Pacific weather.

Why did Rock move from Nebraska to Guam? It comes down to location, and he says it's just large enough for what he does.

First, he says Guam is very biodiverse. As of 2018, the University of Florida's Marine Biodiversity Survey of Guam shows that Guam is home to more than 5,700 species of marine life alone. Rock says he hopes to help people be more aware of this.

Second, it's right in the environment Rock wants to work around. In particular, he says he enjoys photographing whales and shark dives.

Rock started in nature photography and more specifically in dive photography after working at KETV in Omaha in the 1970s. He had been scuba diving in Vietnam and wanted to do it again.

He realized the Midwest probably wasn't the best place to become a scuba diver.

"I wasn't going to get good if I didn't live somewhere I could do this every day," he says.

**"You have to know the behavior of what you're photographing, he says, "and you have to be patient."  
-Tim Rock**

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So, in 1981, he moved to Guam, and has lived there since. Rock owns and operates Double Blue Photography and a gallery for his images.

His work has received a lot of attention, and he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the UNO School of Communication in 2017. At the 2016 Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture, Rock was also the Guam delegate for the Visual Arts.

Of all the interesting wildlife he's encountered, Rock says the animals he'd most like to work with, but hasn't yet, is the sperm whale.

Sperm whales are the largest toothed predators in the world, and can grow up to 60 feet, according to the Encyclopedia of Marine Animals. They are deep-sea animals, Rock says, which makes them difficult to properly follow or photograph.

"You can't really go in the water with them for too long because they dive back down as quick as they come up," Rock says.

This isn't to say Rock hasn't done impressive dives. He works with whales, sharks, smaller reef fish, sea anemones, people and sometimes, just the island itself. He has made himself familiar with the island and the species he works with, he says, which helps in his line of work.

"You have to know the behavior of what you're photographing," he says, "and you have to be patient."

Rock receives requests occasionally, from those who need a photo of a specific animal or environment.

"Someone may say they need (a photo of) a clownfish. Well, there are 32 different kinds of clownfish; I need to know which one will work for them," Rock says, "You need to know your environment and be able to identify your subject."

In addition to his gallery, Rock has displayed in National Geographic, Lonely Planet and the Smithsonian magazine. He self-publishes his photography books and has co-authored books on diving in various regions around Guam.

Most recently, Rock says, he was a judge at the 13th Annual YAP (Federated States of Micronesia) Manta Fest, a scuba-diving and photography contest in the YAP. The contest features wildlife from the Micronesia subregion in Oceania, including the titular manta rays.

Rock says there are two lessons he learned at UNO that have stuck with him through his career from working at KETV to Double Blue Photography.

"From the days of Joe McCartney and Bob Reilly, what they told me was to go out and do it," he says. "Don't be afraid."



**Tim Rock, an alumnus of the University of Nebraska at Omaha and a photojournalist based in the Western Pacific, brings that unexplored frontier to life through photography. Photo submitted.**



**Tim Rock has taken the advice of former UNO faculty to heart, going and doing without fear. Photo submitted.**

# 2019 grad serves as Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia

By Crystal Kwaw

“Being away from home isn’t as scary as you think,” Charlotte Reilly says.

In 2019 and 2020, Reilly served in the Peace Corps stationed in Zambia, a country in southern Africa, until the Peace Corps sent back its volunteers to the U.S. during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The 2019 University of Nebraska at Omaha School of Communication graduate says Zambia is a lot different than her apartment in Denmark was during her study abroad as a junior.

For one, Reilly used solar panels to charge her gadgets. She took bucket baths and extracted water from a well.

On her Peace Corps endeavor in Zambia, telling time was handled differently.

Here in the West, time is exact. Zambians tell time using the direction of the sun, Reilly says.

Reilly taught English to fifth- to eighth -grade students in Zambia.

Zambia’s official language is English but children are schooled in their native dialect Nyanja until the fifth grade. A language tutor taught Reilly this dialect of Nyanja, spoken in the Eastern Province mountains.

Her 11-week training consisted of safety and health instruction with 35 people who were learning the native languages.

The real test of her language skills began when she moved to her community with fewer English speakers.

“I definitely still have a lot more learning to do, but I’ve learned I’m a lot more adaptable than I thought I was,” Reilly says.

She attributes learning how to interact with people from some of the classes taught at UNO.

“Communication is huge in new situations, and, I mean, as a communication major, that helped a lot,” Reilly says.

Despite the language barrier, Reilly expected the cultural exchange to go well.

Even though some Zambians don’t understand why the Peace Corps is there, Zambians are open and welcoming to strangers, Reilly says.

Her project group was called the “Rural Education Development Program.”

Her training also consisted of understanding the culture. In the villages, women have very defined gender roles. Skirts and dresses must be longer than the knees. In the cities, women can wear jeans.



**Reilly served in the Peace Corps stationed in Zambia, a country in southern Africa. Photo submitted.**

In the U.S., Reilly says privacy and solitude are valued.

“They [Zambians] might not understand if you just want to be alone,” Reilly says. “They might think you’re mad at them.”

North America is more individualistic. For example, most people in pedestrian situations don’t greet people they pass. In Zambia, people greet in passing—even strangers. Reilly says she’s an adapter, although she lived a different lifestyle in America.

Zambians eat primarily with their hands; which Reilly says she doesn’t mind. Nshima is a staple food made of milling meal powder and maize with a side of sauce to dip it in. The food is bland and contains a lot of cooking oil and salt, Reilly’s taste buds tell her.

“Volunteers add hot sauce to their meals,” Reilly says. “Once I [lived] on my own, I [was making] food for myself all the time.”

Her host family was within a short walking distance from the school.

Reilly admitted to being a bit homesick.

She says it’s a little sad to see the family and friends move on back home, and it can feel like she’s missing out. However, she is

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shared the same experience with other trainees, so they were each other's support system.

Reilly says she wasn't sure what to do with her skills after college. The idea to become a Peace Corps volunteer stemmed from hearing her older brother talk about doing it, but he didn't apply.

**“It’s cool to exchange cultures and to use what I’ve learned in school to help Zambian students succeed in their academic life.”**  
**-Charlotte Reilly**

She says she wanted to experience a new and different life.

After doing the “long, long application,” and two interviews, she accepted the offer right away, even though the Peace Corps gave her three days to ponder.

“I just wanted to be able to use the skills and abilities I’ve learned over the years to help people,” Reilly says. “The Peace Corps is very much about cultural exchange.”



“I think it’ll be cool to exchange cultures and to use what I’ve learned in school to help Zambian students succeed in their academic life,” Reilly says. Photo by Charlotte Reilly.

# Abou-Nasr gets ready for global markets from his experiences in Japan

By Koichi Iwasaki

Adam Abou-Nasr wants to be the greatest Pokémon master of all time.

He says he's highly committed to exploring the world. This has motivated him to keep learning in college for almost 13 years.

He currently serves as an associate editor at Nintendo World Report and taught English while studying at Meiji University in Tokyo, Japan.

Through the Education Abroad program at University of Nebraska at Omaha, Abou-Nasr took classes in mass media, communication and marketing.

He credits Adam Tyma, Ph.D. and his Introduction to Mass Communication course at UNO for guiding him to his field.

"Tyma's big class was giant and awesome," Abou-Nasr says.

Abou-Nasr says his studies at Meiji University were quite difficult. Despite studying Japanese at UNO, he still felt overwhelmed.

Still, he enjoyed his time in Tokyo and Abou-Nasr says he's looking forward to answering questions about what it's like to be in Tokyo during the Olympics.

"I think the Olympics will change Tokyo's relationship with the rest of the world and bring in a ton of foreign businesses," he says. "Japan doesn't have any big problems right now like the U.S, China, and the European Union, so I think Japan can become a global leader again."

**"I really learned how to be on my own," he says. "I, of course, learned a ton of Japanese, but I also learned a lot about other countries."**  
**-Adam Abou-Nasr**

He's also quick to point out some differences between the U.S. and Japan. Abou-Nasr was surprised that the Japanese don't walk the busy pavements like in New York. He also pointed out the quiet atmosphere in Tokyo.

"It's interesting how quiet it is here. In class, it's like pulling teeth to get Japanese students to speak," he says. "The packed trains are silent. Even cars don't seem to honk at all."

One of the major cultural differences concerns work experience. In the U.S, most college students work jobs while going to school, but Japanese college students don't. Therefore, he says, sometimes it's difficult to talk with the students.

"I ran out of money pretty early and felt really worthless after a few scholarship rejections," he says. Many students in Japan have never worked or are just now working their first part-time job."

He overcame the challenges through talking with people from other countries. He says he had a constant group chat with exchange students from other countries, such as Germany and China whenever going out alone.



**"I really learned how to be on my own. I, of course, learned a ton of Japanese, but I also learned a lot about other countries," Abou-Nasr says. Photo submitted.**

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As a gay man, Abou-Nasr says, no one cares about his sexuality in Japan while some in the U.S. feel hatred for gays.

“It’s a bit hard for me to connect with the students here because they all went to college right after high school,” he says. “UNO is really popular with non-traditional students, so I made a lot of friends closer to my age back home.”

He says his German dorm mates give him a lot of perspective on the European Union, and he had five-minute discussions with his Chinese friends about their countries every week before class.

“I really learned how to be on my own,” he says. “I, of course, learned a ton of Japanese, but I also learned a lot about other countries.”

He says his experiences in Japan made him more of a cosmopolitan person. In the future, he would like to work at a media company in New York or major city using his marketing skills. He’s finished his

studies in Tokyo, but Abou-Nasr says he hasn’t ruled out a return to Japan.

“With a communications degree and experience in Japan, I can come back pretty much whenever as an English teacher,” he says.



**Abou-Nasr (far left) says he overcame the challenges of living abroad through talking with people from other countries. He says he had a constant group chat with exchange students from other countries, such as Germany and China whenever going out alone.**  
Photo by Adam Abou-Nasr.



**Kathy Nguyen adapted to Eastern European cultures while she studied in Budapest, Hungary. Photo submitted.**

## Budapest to Tokyo fulfills part of bucket list

By Ariana Wesley-Powell

Kathy Nguyen, who is a communication studies and journalism and media communication major, has checked off items on her bucket list during her time at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Her decision to study abroad did not come easily. Nguyen was gearing up to graduate in the spring of 2019.

“I was waiting on doing a backpacking trip in Europe after graduation for three weeks, but I didn’t want to spend two or three weeks traveling,” Nguyen says. “I wanted to really immerse myself in the culture. I thought for the money that the trip would cost – for the semester I could spend time in a different country.”

Due to burnout, she says, of doing the same day-to-day routine, she opted to look toward studying abroad.

“It went from deciding if I want to do Europe or Asia,” Nguyen says. “Then I decided that I wanted to do both.”

Nguyen had two opportunities to study abroad. The first country she landed in was Budapest, Hungary where she studied cross-cultural communication at Eötvös Loránd University.

She says her favorite memory was waking up in her flat for the first time and thinking that this is a completely foreign country. It was pure excitement that she was there.

“I’m young. This is the time when I’ll have the least amount of obligations and the most free time,” Nguyen says.

Studying abroad, Nguyen says, meant meeting new friends and an “enlightened experience.”

The balance of school and being able to see her friends every day, living in the city center and taking the tram, she says, was amazing.

The classes that she took were taught in English and working with all non-native English speakers gave her the opportunity to apply her cross-cultural communication skills.

Nguyen says: “I seriously went into study abroad thinking that none of the classes were going to transfer over (to UNO) – so I definitely went for the experience. I thought that life experience was so valuable to me that it was worth gaining more time on my academic career. Luckily, the classes did transfer.”

### From Hungary to Japan

Following the Budapest experience, she then took her studies to Meiji University in Tokyo, Japan, where she studied business and cross-cultural communication.

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In Tokyo, her best memories, she says were of the good food.

“There was never a bad Japanese restaurant; the food was just phenomenal,” Nguyen says.

Coming back to the U.S. was a hard adjustment for Nguyen. After being away for a year she says her way of living had completely shifted. Assimilation back into her lifestyle would take getting used to.

“When I came home, I woke up I did not know where in the world I was. It was an adjustment from how I had been living,” Nguyen says.

Living in a different country, adjusting your routine to function in that environment and studying are the largest challenges.

“Study abroad is almost like you are on vacation,” she says. “Even if you are attending great classes and learning a lot, you’re still on vacation for a whole semester.”

Studying abroad opened up Nguyen’s views a lot more than when she was confined to being in the U.S. Issues such as public transportation and health care have sparked her interests and opened her eyes about how the rest of the world functions. She says she believes that everyone should have a chance to experience ways of living that could benefit the public.

“I really learned to appreciate other cultures more and everything you have. The amount of perspective you gain when meeting and talking with these people abroad is a valuable experience,” Nguyen says.

The study abroad experiences enriched her academic life back at UNO by learning to adapt in a fast-paced environment. Having to problem solve, she says, is the best way to adapt to any situation you are in, whether that is in college or living in a foreign country.

“You have to learn how to problem solve in real situations where you have to think and go and experience trial and error,” Nguyen says.

**“It went from deciding if I want to do Europe or Asia,” Nguyen says. “Then I decided that I wanted to do both.”**

**-Kathy Nguyen**

Nguyen’s plans for the future may not include studying in Omaha, Nebraska long term. She says it is “prime time” to explore the options which include: a master’s program abroad,



**Kathy Nguyen studied business and cross-cultural communication at Meiji University in Tokyo, Japan. Photo submitted.**

working holiday visas, exchange programs and post-graduation fellowships, or, she may stay for a bit in Omaha and then move abroad.

Nguyen says she is learning to not look ahead any more than one or two years. She is figuring it out as she goes because she is changing her mind a lot. Getting yourself out there while you are young and have the time and the energy to explore the world is what Nguyen recommends to anyone who would want to study abroad.

Crossing a few things off the bucket list now can be rewarding.

“If it doesn’t challenge you, it doesn’t change you,” Nguyen says.



# Debating abroad promotes idea exchange

By Samantha Weideman

"People in general recognize that there's a need to understand the global perspective and not live in our own little bubbles, which we tend to do," says Barbara Pickering, Ph.D., a professor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

"That's a challenge," she says.

In 2001, Pickering went on the three-week exchange trip to Japan as part of her assignment as a member of the National Communication Association's Committee on International Discussion and Debate. While she had traveled internationally before, it was her first time in Asia.

Most of Pickering's trips had been in English-speaking areas, so the first thing she and her team did was brush up on their Japanese.

"We had a dictionary that had basic Japanese terms," Pickering says. "We really made an effort to learn some of the language for basic communication."

Once they had a grasp on the language, Pickering and her team participated in a variety of different events, including campus debates and a debate sponsored by The Daily Yomiuri, a local newspaper. The goal of these debates wasn't really about winning, although there was a winner and a loser determined after each.

"The goal was really more for us to exchange ideas and talk about and in this case, it was public policy and Japanese foreign policy," Pickering says. "What was interesting and educational for us was learning about their system of government."

The CIDD—which Pickering was a member of—is responsible for coordinating international travel for their debate teams. To foster international exchange, the CIDD program sends a U.S. team (of two) abroad and receives another team from that nation. Those teams visit host campuses and debate with students from the nation they're in, she says.

The individuals chosen for each team undergo an interview process and are determined to be adaptable to new situations. Those on the CIDD used criteria to verify the adaptability of each applicant.

"Our guideline was, you have to be willing to try new things, and try things that you may not be comfortable with," Pickering says. "Whether it's food or environment or cultural practices, that's a part of this experience. I think that's something all of us learned from."

The importance of debate is not lost on Pickering. Most of her career has been spent promoting the activity, whether as a debate coach or debate teacher. Although it has evolved due to the current political climate, Pickering still advocates for its place in modern society.



**In summer 2001, the season between her departure from James Madison University and her arrival at UNO, Pickering traveled to Japan to coach one of the National Communication Association's (NCA) International debate teams. Pictured (L to R): Andy Peterson, Ann Marie Todd and Barbara Pickering stand in front of Kinkaku-ji in Kyoto, Japan. Photo submitted.**

"Debate does two things: one, it helps people to understand how to look at both sides of an issue, which we don't do very well right now," Pickering says. "It also helps people to understand how a democratic society functions. That's at the heart of what education is all about to begin with."

The CIDD program led to many participating students pursuing a master's degree in the U.S., and many of them remain in the U.S. or travel between here and Japan. Pickering remains in contact with some of the individuals involved in the program.

"It's a great program, and I was fortunate to be a part of it," Pickering says. "It was a great trip. I wouldn't trade it for the world."



**Dinners in Japan provided moments of culture shock for Pickering. Every evening after events, she says large groups of people wanted to practice their English with her and her debate team, often packed with references to American pop culture. Photo submitted.**



# Professor Chris Allen reveals his biggest storytelling takeaways from a lifetime of travel

By Kathy Nguyen

Chris Allen, Ph.D., wears a lot of hats from general manager of UNO Television to School of Communication professor of 24 years.

Through his tenure at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, he's been able to go to London, Oman, Pakistan and India to name a few places.

Allen leads the School of Communication on an annual two-week trip to London and Scotland through his Global Media Communication course. The group gets to explore historical landmarks along with touring journalism and advertising agencies.

However, the expert adventurer hasn't always had traveling at the top of his list. His first serious travel was when he was 31 years old.

"I didn't think that people from small-town Iowa did those things," Allen says.

He took his first extracontinental trip to Siberia in the then Soviet Union in 1991.

From that moment, he says that he knew he wanted to open his heart to the world.

From his lifetime of travels, Allen embraces doing three things when communicating with new people from different cultures. The first step, he says, is to thoroughly listen before responding.

The next step, he says, is to make an honest response.

"The third step is to make sure in this conversation that you are really trying to understand the other person's culture, their situation," Allen says.

Even if schedule difficulties rule out a semester or year abroad exchange, Allen strongly recommends doing a short-term faculty-led exchange. Even when it seems impossible to fit into your academic career – he says, "Just go."

"You will never ever have a chance to do it again in your life," Allen says. "You will come back absolutely a different person."

Looking to the future, Allen plans to retire within the next five years. But don't think he intends on slowing down one bit.

He says he'll continue his international adventures while contributing to the world as a global citizen.

Allen says: "I want for my wife and I to be young enough to continue to travel. No rocking chair for us. I want my wife to be able to travel a lot as I have now."



Professor Chris Allen, Ph.D., planned on taking a new group to London this spring, however, the trip was canceled due to the COVID-19 virus, as UNO made that decision in March. Photo by University Communications.



# Professor Hugh Reilly shares his goals for expanding the international profile of the School of Communication

By Kathy Nguyen

Looking into Professor Hugh Reilly's office, you can tell he's a busy man, especially because he serves as the director of the School of Communication.

His 20 years at UNO have taken him all over the world from London to Pakistan, Dubai to India and several other places in the name of education.

Reilly has worked with two universities in Afghanistan supporting the establishment of official communication departments and has traveled to Afghanistan, India and Dubai with his Afghan colleagues for training.

Furthermore, Reilly says he makes it a point to oversee a faculty-led study abroad to bring School of Communication students around the world. He's been to Ireland five times on the Irish Literature faculty-led exchange (almost 30 times in his lifetime in total) and three times on the London Global Media Communication faculty-led exchange.

While he didn't pursue a study abroad stint during his undergraduate or master's degree, Reilly makes it a point to encourage study abroad to all School of Communication students because of how enriching the experience can be. Going abroad can offer new experiences that can enhance the way you go about communication and storytelling, he says.

"That's what so important about traveling, you get a perspective that you cannot get any other way [even] if you're born and raised in Omaha, Nebraska, and even if you've traveled all over the country," Reilly says.

## Reilly's globalized vision for the School of Communication

Looking to the future, Reilly says he hopes to grow the international profile of the School of Communication in any and all ways.

"I would love to see us expand the amount of international students in the class," the director says. "They add a unique perspective."

He says that it's a matter of attaining the necessary resources in order to pursue new heights and objectives.

"More state department grants [would] allow us to expand our programming in other countries like Afghanistan," he says.

Whether it's accepting more international faculty and students into the classroom or bridging the gap between textbook and location, Reilly says that the globalization element will add a competitive edge to the School of Communication.

Grooming students to have cultural intelligence will not only create outstanding communication professionals but also global citizens from UNO to the world.



**World traveler, School of Communication Director and Professor, Hugh Reilly, says he wants to grow the international opportunities for students and the resources necessary to reach that goal. Reilly was selected by the Omaha Press Club Foundation to receive the 2020 Educator of the Year award. Photo by Randy Mattley.**



# Living among local Italians breaks language barrier

By Alyse Mancino

For journalism and media communication adjunct instructor Torri Panteleon, living in Naples, Italy during the early 1970s wasn't exactly what he expected.

Panteleon was stationed at NATO headquarters as a E-6 ranking in Naples, Italy, while in the U.S. Navy. He worked at NATO and handled highly classified documents and gave combat strategy briefings to the NATO higher command.

While most military units are stationed at a base, Panteleon and his unit were fortunate to live among the locals in Naples because the city lacked base housing.

At this time, the euro didn't exist so the soldiers and officers there had to learn the exchange from U.S. dollars to the Italian lira. And communicating with the native Italians wasn't easy either.

"I was fortunate that my hometown where I'm from back in Massachusetts was predominantly Italian and mostly kids I went to school with were either first or second generation Americans," Panteleon says. "And, they spoke the language, so I picked up street slang."

While Panteleon wasn't fully fluent, he was able to relate to the Italians where he was stationed. He says it was helpful in the way he communicated with the locals and lived among them.

Another major aspect of communication is nonverbals. While hand gestures can be a huge help in communicating with others who don't speak the same language as you, Panteleon was advised to avoid using hand gestures because there were some that were very insulting in the Italian culture.

However, Panteleon says working hard to attempt to communicate with the local people was powerful. This was a lesson learned from his wife.

Hours after Panteleon and his wife, Judy, were married in July of 1972, they flew back out to Italy where Panteleon was stationed.



**Torri Panteleon works part-time as an adjunct professor in the School of Communication, but he works full-time as a video producer for the City of Papillion. Photo by Karissa Madrigal.**

In Europe, it's common for the people to shop and go to the markets every day for fresh food, while in the U.S., he says, it's more common to do your shopping once a week or every two weeks.

"My wife would go down to the shops and buy \$50 worth of stuff which was unheard of," Panteleon says. "She then got the nickname 'Bella Americana'."

Apartment complexes in Italy would cater to Americans so several Navy families lived there, Panteleon says.

"My wife found out that there were other Americans living in these apartments that stayed home all the time," Panteleon says. "So she befriended some of the people around our age living there and she took them out into the world. You can't put a price on that."

Through his wife's bold moves, those fellow Americans began to open up and they became friendly with Italians. They were invited to people's houses and got to know the shop owners and became beloved friends among the locals.

"What I found out is that if you go out and try to meet them at their level and communicate at their level, you'll be surprised at the response," Panteleon says



**While stationed in Italy, Torri Panteleon was able to travel to several places across Europe, including the ruins of Pompeii. Photo submitted.**

# Gary Repair: Traveler, Emmy award winner and instructor

By Latea Glenn

Flying 9,800 miles to tropical locations, exotic animals and amazing new adventures are not the typical career description of a college instructor, but that has been Gary Repair's career at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

His passion for communication started in high school.

"I was always fascinated in other people and how their lives were," Repair says.

After three years of military service, he was able to get a Master of Arts in Communication and began working at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in the 1980s..

As a part of the communication area, Repair has used his skills to teach others and create several documentaries.

"I've always been enamored with film and how they're made," Repair says, "because they take you places you can't normally go."

During a trip to Morocco he documented the stories of Muslims and Christians living together peacefully. In India he helped improve the teaching techniques of faculty from Kabul University. In Madagascar he partnered with Dr. Edward E. Louis, Jr., the Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium director of conservation Genetics, to tell the stories of its inhabitants.

Then when Repair was asked to go to Madagascar in late 2004 Repair says he replied, "Oh, in a heartbeat."

He helped lay the ground work for a future documentary.

The documentary on Madagascar was his first high-definition production and was later awarded for a regional Emmy. It was also narrated by actor and producer, Danny Glover. Repair says it covered the issues of endangered land cleared to feed the growing population and explored the discovery of wildlife such as new lemur species.



An animal from Gary Repair's Madagascar photo archive.



**UNO Instructor Gary Repair says he's always been "enamored with film" and has traveled abroad several times. Photo by Karrisa Madrigal. Photo by Karissa Madrigal.**

While there were challenges, Repair says he was able to work with the zoo's team to train the local Madagascar people to use the new technology and begin research of their own.

"Our driver didn't speak anything we spoke," Repair says.

They eventually communicated through a tour guide in German which Repair speaks as well.

Despite the challenge Repair says: "We had a great time. We drew pictures and learned words. We had a real mixture of languages."

Communicating with new people can be awkward and learning the social etiquette of the country can be difficult. Repair says one of the best ways to get around is through humor.

Most people enjoy talking about themselves and have a sense of national pride. By being open to learning and new ideas, you allow yourself to grow a deep appreciation for the country and its people.

Repair says his experiences have helped to enrich the way he teaches. He currently teaches Film History and Appreciation, Video Field Production and Media Storytelling II.

"The biggest thing is when I feel that students learn something, it's a real plus for me. It makes it all worth while," Repair says.





# Growth and hiring backlog leads to the need for additional faculty

By Kathy Nguyen

The University of Nebraska at Omaha School of Communication faculty underwent incredible growth for the 2019-2020 academic year.

Hugh Reilly, director of the School of Communication, says that a plethora of retirements and a massive course backlog shaped the course for the school to hire 12 new faculty members.

The issue, Reilly says, first started with a university faculty buyout several years ago creating a steep drop in School of Communication faculty at that time.

Along with this, a growing backlog of students who hadn't completed their UNO public speaking requirement before graduation created a huge shortage in public speaking sections due to the high demand.

All of this created the need for the School of Communication to hire so many new faculty in 2019, Reilly says.

"We got the resources from the [Communication, Fine Arts and Media] dean and the administration and once we had that," says Reilly, "we could accomplish the task."

Of the 12 new faculty, six members are on one-year contracts, four are on tenure tracks and two are full-time instructors. The public speaking sections expanded from 35 to over 50 sections, Reilly says.

The new full-time faculty ranges from long-time UNO adjunct instructors to new UNO faces.

## One-Year, Full-Time Faculty



**Amanda Goodrich**  
Photo by Karissa Madrigal.

**Amanda Goodrich** has been with UNO as a student, graduate teaching assistant, part-time instructor and now full-time instructor. Along with teaching, Goodrich is also a coach for the award-winning MavForensics Competitive Speech team.



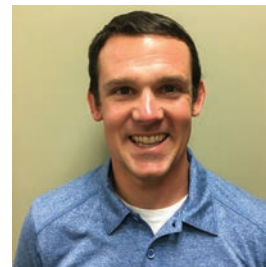
**Clay Johnson**  
Photo by University Communications.

**Clay Johnson** has previously taught communication at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and James Madison University. He says he loves UNO's diverse student body and is looking forward to continuing his time with the School of Communication.



**Janet Raddish**  
Photo by University Communications.

**Janet Raddish** started at UNO as a part-time adjunct professor in 2012 before she transitioned into her full-time position this year. Raddish credits her passion for UNO to her rich family legacy dating back to Omaha University when her father attended in 1939 along with several family members since then.



**Andrew Stem**  
Photo submitted.

**Andrew Stem** divides his time between his three classes at UNO, helping with the High School Media Conference for the School of Communication, and working full time as the sports copy editor and staff writer at the Omaha World-Herald. He says he enjoys being a part of the School of Communication because it makes him feel more connected with the campus community and allows him to interact more with students.



**Amy Elefson**  
Photo by University Communications.

**Amy Elefson** balances being a full-time Ph.D. student at the University of Southern Mississippi as well as being a full-time UNO instructor teaching her four sections of public speaking fundamentals online. She says she was very impressed with the student-centered focus of the university.

## New professor finds happy medium in Omaha

By Karissa Madrigal

Chang Bi, Ph.D., brings a global perspective to the classroom in her first year teaching at the University of Nebraska at Omaha's School of Communication.

Bi serves as an assistant professor in the advertising and public relations concentration, where she teaches Media Communication Research and Capstone I.

Upon accepting her offer from UNO, Bi says she was excited to begin teaching in her area. Her favorite topic to teach is quantitative research. She also says her experience at UNO in terms of culture and community has been wonderful.

"The colleagues have been great, supporting one another," Bi says. "This was my first official teaching job beyond student teaching at Bowling Green, so it was difficult to get used to."

Bi, also known as Nicky, received a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism her native China. From there, she went on to receive a Master of Arts in Media Management from Hong Kong Baptist University. After that she received another Master of the Arts in Public Relations from Kent State University. Finally, she received her doctorate from Bowling Green University in media communication.

Of the many places she has lived and studied, she says Omaha is a great place to be, especially size wise. According to the U.S.



**From Beijing to Bowling Green to Omaha, Nicky Bi, Ph.D., brings her global perspective into the classroom as a new full-time UNO professor. Photo by University Communications.**

census, Omaha's population is approximately 460,000 people. Previously in her native Beijing, China, the population was around 20 million people while Bowling Green, Ohio only had 31,000 residents.

Since moving to the U.S., Bi says her favorite pastime is exploring new cities. She says her favorite city in the U.S. is "Washington D.C." as it reminds her of home. Another favorite U.S. city she's visited is San Francisco as she says it is the "perfect temperature."

With all of her traveling, it was hard to make her new location home, but that's what her golden retriever is for. She even has a photo of her 90-pound dog on her office desk, but she says about Kevin: "It's all muscle, though."

## David Sutera creates new teaching experiences at UNO

By Karissa Madrigal

Before his teaching days, professor David Sutera, Ph.D. was an actor.

He has even met Matt Leblanc, and says he is much smaller in person than one might imagine.

In addition to acting, some of his other jobs have included a dog track announcer and stand-up comedian.



**Omaha native professor David Sutera, who previously taught at Doane University, says he is excited to teach Mavericks about media and communication. Photo by Karissa Madrigal.**

"Being a stand-up comedian was a lot harder than you'd think," he says.

Sutera began teaching at UNO in August 2019. You can find him teaching Media Storytelling I and II, Creative Media Capstone and History of Film. Sutera previously taught at Doane University for four years and decided to teach at UNO to have the opportunity to work at a larger university and teach more classes. It is also closer to his home.

Sutera holds a doctorate in media and film studies from the University of Kansas and a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Utah. He earned two Bachelor of Science degrees in biology from Creighton University and a secondary education from Buena Vista.

Sutera's transition at UNO has been great and he says the culture and academic community are strong.

"The camaraderie with the other professors, working with the students, working in a lab setting and what we talk about in lectures is really great stuff," he says.

One day he hopes to fulfill the wish to go abroad.



# UNO alumna shares her excitement for teaching full time at alma mater

By Elle Love

Alumna Casey Riesberg says her dream job was becoming a full-time professor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

When Riesberg attended UNO, she studied speech communication and advertising and public relations. Riesberg says she found her love for teaching communication through working with her adviser and public speaking professor Marlina Davidson.

"Being in her class made me want to be like her, being an instructor," Riesberg says.

After she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in speech communication, Riesberg started graduate school, focusing her interest in organization and health communications while she balanced being a graduate teaching assistant at UNO.

"I had to organize my life and make sure I knew where my priorities were

and what I could realistically get done," Riesberg says. "My job as a teaching assistant in public speaking classes and being an instructor always came first."

Riesberg says during that time, she worked for three years as a marketing intern for Phoenix Academy, a nonprofit private K-8 institution. She promoted the nonprofit through internal and external marketing, through its social media, newsletters and website.

"I got to actually apply what I did in my advertising and PR background while I still doing what I love, which is teaching," Riesberg says.

While finishing her graduate studies, Riesberg maintained her part-time teaching engagement with UNO in public speaking after finishing her graduate studies at UNO.

She also worked as an instructional technologist at Creighton University where she trained faculty, staff and students on university utilized programs. She also developed eLearning sites on

Canvas and facilitated online course development in various departments.

She completed her Master of Arts in communication in 2017. Riesberg left Creighton University to teach full time in the UNO School of Communication in August, where she works with instructors she had as a student.

"I would like to bring my creativity to the table and think of new ways to teach elements that we've been teaching students for years," Riesberg says



**Casey Riesberg says that she's come full circle as a full-time UNO professor, teaching with some of the same professors that she had as an undergraduate. Photo by Karissa Madrigal.**

## UNO alumna teaches full time after working in Strategic Command

By Elle Love

Stephanie Larsen returned to her alma mater the University of Nebraska at Omaha to teach full-time in the School of Communication, in August 2019, after a stint working at the Department of Defense at U.S. Strategic Command.

Larsen spent the first two college years at Iowa Western Communication College as a first-generation student with an undecided major.

"When I transferred to UNO, I immediately got involved in Public Relations Student Society of America, MavSolutions (now MavPR), and started taking more communication classes," Larsen says. "It all just came together and clicked."

When Larsen graduated in 2010 with her Bachelor of Science in speech communication, she became a graduate teaching assistant at UNO where she taught Public Speaking Fundamentals before she left to work at United States Strategic Command

"It was because of my speech communication background and they wanted me to do a lot of briefing," Larsen says.

Larsen says she took the civilian position at USSTRATCOM where she worked as a missile defense program analyst, where she put together PowerPoints, after collaborating with missile defense experts, to present to senior leaders at the briefings. Larsen also worked as a workplace development specialist, where she coached a group of Air Force leaders to enhance leadership competencies resulting in individual career development plans.

Larsen says the benefits of her experience working closely with veterans and active duty military allowed her to keep in touch with them. She said working in STRATCOM was an opportunity that she never knew she wanted or needed.

Larsen went to Bellevue University and completed her Master of Arts in managerial communication in 2015.



**Stephanie Larsen uses her background in speech communications in her civilian position as a missile defense program analyst at the U.S. Strategic Command. Photo by University Communications.**

Larsen worked as coordinator of advising and veteran services for Iowa Western College in 2014 then worked as an adjunct instructor for UNO in 2016 until she applied to be a full-time instructor in 2019.

"Although I thought I was walking away from the path that I wanted to be on, I still was able to find my way back and I'm so thankful for that experience," Larsen says.

# Gent dedicates herself to research, debate and study of homelessness

By Megan Schneider

Through her research, teaching and service, Whitney Gent, Ph.D. displays passion for serving others.

An assistant professor, Gent joined the School of Communication faculty at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in August 2019.

She graduated in May 2018 from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and holds a doctorate in rhetoric, politics and culture. Her Master of Arts was earned from Indiana University Bloomington.

Outside of the classroom, Gent is adapting to life in Omaha. She began taking beginner's curling lessons at Baxter Arena.

Before her arrival at UNO, she taught for a year at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Gent currently teaches media communication research and argumentation and debate. Her research

focuses on public deliberation, advocacy for policymaking, rhetorical theory and homelessness.

"I love the people," Gent says. "My colleagues have been incredible. The students are really impressive."

Communication has always been interesting to her, she says.

While in college, she cared about issues related to homelessness.

Today, she primarily studies how we talk about homelessness in the United States in media representations and public policy projects.

She's working on a book project called "Housing First," which is a model for addressing homelessness.

While obtaining her degree, she researched communication and how it relates to people without a home.



**Whitney Gent, Ph.D., focuses her research on theory and homelessness, public deliberation and advocacy for policy making. Photo by Katheryn Lopez-Chavez.**

"In the process of developing those skills, I learned how much it matters to think critically about what is going on in the world around them," Gent says. "That's why the teaching element is important to me."

She enjoys conversations with students in her classes that produce impressive insight and deep discussion.

She says: "I think it's so important that people learn how to critically assess the messages around them. In doing so, we can figure out how to more effectively address social problems. We have the capacity to change the way people think."

## Professor brings business knowledge to the classroom

By Elle Love

Sharon Storch, Ph.D. says she received a warm welcome from the University of Nebraska's School of Communication and her new home town.



**Sharon Storch, Ph.D., brings 10 years of management experience and two years of teaching higher education into her new role as a full-time UNO professor. Photo by Katheryn Lopez-Chavez.**

She arrived in Omaha from Pennsylvania and began teaching communication studies courses in the fall 2019 semester.

"It's impressive to me that every person I meet when they find out that I'm new, they always say verbatim, 'you're going to love it here,'" Storch says.

Storch attended Indiana University of Pennsylvania, where she earned a Master of Education degree in business, computer and information technology in 2003 and a doctorate in communications media and instructional technology in 2018. Storch says as an undergrad, she was very interested in business including marketing, public relations and merchandising.

Storch worked in the Pittsburgh district for 10 years in various areas of management for corporations. She wanted to go on a slightly different career path without relocating after reaching the highest level of promotability.

"I really had to think hard about what my new niche would look like," Storch says. "Do

I want to stay in a business position, or did I want to move forward and think about something else?"

Storch says she looked into education to take what she enjoyed from training employees in her business and evolve it into teaching areas of business and technology.

Storch taught at the School of Communication Studies at Kent State University in Ohio for two years and finished her doctorate before she applied for the organizational communication position at UNO.

She says it was her first choice because of the overall School of Communication program and its focus on bringing real-world experiences into the classroom.

"Bridging the concepts and theories with practical applications is really important," Storch says. "I was very impressed as I researched UNO that they have such a high commitment to that."



# Shaughnessy reflects on experiences at UNO

by Kathryn Lopez-Chavez

As a young adult, Rita Shaughnessy says she knew she wanted to apply her love for language and inclusivity to her career.

In 1987, she enrolled at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in pursuit of obtaining her bachelor's degree.

Shaughnessy juggled more than textbooks and essays during her years in higher education. As a single mother of a kindergartner and a third-grader at the time, Shaughnessy was a full-time secretary as well as a full-time student. Long nights of studying after tucking her two young daughters into bed did not stop her from reaching her goals. She says this degree meant more to her since it opened opportunities not only for her, but also for her two young daughters.

Much like many other undergraduate students, Shaughnessy says she had a difficult time finding the perfect major for her.

"I loved everything," Shaughnessy says. "I took 12 credit hours of history and had to tell myself to stop it because I knew I didn't want to be a history teacher."

It was time for her to find her true calling.

She took Deborah Smith-Howell's course Rhetorical Theory and Criticism where Shaughnessy says she found her passion for speech. This course required students to analyze political speeches and sparked an interest in Shaughnessy. She found herself basing all of her assignments on politicians and political topics. This focus propelled her to pursue a freelance business in speech consulting services, she says.

In December of 1990, she graduated from the University of Nebraska at Omaha with a bachelor's degree in speech communication; and she decided to continue her education at UNO receiving her master's degree in communication in May of 1996.

Shaughnessy, a current public speaking instructor, has taught for 26 years at UNO and plans to retire after the spring semester of 2020. She says she plans on keeping busy by continuing her speech consulting services and spending time with her family.



**Whether it's speech consulting services or advising students through their academic careers, Rita Shaughnessy says she feels fulfilled when she helps others reach their goals. Photo by Karissa Madrigal.**

## End of the spring semester will see other retirements

Professors Shereen Bingham, Ph.D., Karen Kangas Dwyer, Ph.D. and Marshall Prisbell, Ph.D. will also retire at the end of the spring semester.

Bingham started working at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1988.

Dwyer started her career, first as a graduate teaching assistant in 1987.

Prisbell arrived in the summer of 1984, at 29 years old, to start teaching that fall.

All three were featured in the 2019 CommUNO issue, "Decades of Communication."



**Shereen Bingham**



**Karen Kangas Dwyer**



**Marshall Prisbell**

# Retired professor's work at UNO has a global reach

By Megan Schneider

At his retirement reception, Bruce Johansen dressed up as President Donald Trump in a parody skit during his final send off.

"I miss the students, almost all of them. I miss the faculty and as Emeritus, I'm entitled to go back and socialize," Johansen says.

In 1982, Bruce Johansen, Ph.D., began his career at the University of Nebraska at Omaha to teach and write.

As a Robert T. Reilly Professor of communication and Native American studies, he has authored 50 books about various topics like climate change, global warming and indigenous people.

Johansen, who retired in August 2019, holds the state system's highest faculty recognition award for Outstanding Research and Creative Activity.

He wrote for several U.S. national publications as a journalist and is published in the Washington Post, New York Times, Wall Street Journal and National Geographic.

"I retired in part because I was sick. People asked me how I was doing," Johansen says. "They still care."

Hugh Reilly, professor and director of the School of Communication, suggested that he take a leave of absence due to being ill.



**Professor Emeritus Bruce Johansen wrote 50 books about various subjects including climate change, global warming and indigenous people. Photo submitted.**



**Renowned journalist and Professor Emeritus Bruce Johansen began teaching at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 1982. Photo by Katheryn Lopez-Chavez.**

"We look after each other," Johansen says.

He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Washington, a Master of Arts from the University of Minnesota and earned his doctorate from the University of Washington. Environmental issues and Native American studies are his research and creative activity interests.

Johansen says UNO put time and effort into building faculty who are interested and exceptional.

Johansen says: "We offer a space for people to grow. There's a conscious effort to make that happen. We are all different and we like it that way."

Johansen reflected on his travels abroad and says not to go as a tourist, but have a host guide a person around a new country that is unfamiliar.

"It's OK to go and see the things as tourists like famous landmarks, but every place has a context," Johansen says.

India played a huge role in his travels around the globe because he was asked to come as a special guest. The people there had a great respect for him academically. He also traveled to Poland to teach at a school named after Pope John Paul II.

Johansen resides in Omaha with his wife, Patricia Keiffer, a Spanish-English interpreter, and has two grandchildren.



## Ad Club plans for the future

By Cait Morrissey

The University of Nebraska at Omaha Advertising Club is heading in a fresh direction with the leadership of co-advisers Andrea Weare Ph.D. and assistant professor Nicki Chang Bi Ph.D.

"I have industry experience so I think I can make a very good connection here," Bi says.

In the upcoming year, she would like to start a mentoring program that consists of partnering an advertising and public relations professional in Omaha with a UNO student. It would help students transition into full-time work.

"I would like to resume the newsletter and encourage more students who are interested in advertising and design to join Ad Club," Bi says.

Ad Club is a student-run organization affiliated with the American Advertising Federation of Omaha. It works with Ad Club to connect college students with a professional organization to develop and enhance skills in advertising, marketing, graphic design, public relations and communication.

One way this is done through AAF's Meet The Pros, a student-focused conference. The event allows students to network with professionals in Omaha.

## MaverickPR: An award-winning student firm

By Dani Apperson

"We're working with a really diverse slate of real clients," says Mars Nevada, the creative director of MaverickPR.

Nevada says there is "nothing like working with real-world clients, audiences and challenges."

MaverickPR is the University of Nebraska at Omaha student-run, full-service public relations firm that provides students with real-world experience.



**MaverickPR's Spring 2020 Staff from top left back row: Mars Nevada, Kaitlin Mason, Kathryn Lopez-Chavez, Sarah Fixmer and Okina Tran. Second row: left to right: Robbie McEvoy, Cristian Robles, Candice Mayfield, Rachel Brader, Molly Trede, Kylie Squires and Grant Rohan. Third row: left to right: Ben Matukewicz, Jake DiMauro, Blake Pfeil, Karen Weber, Hannah Asbury, Maya Solarana and David Todd. Not pictured: Aniya Greene and Ulises Orozco. Photo by Liz Rollin.**



**Area advertising professionals and judges Latea Glenn, Madeline Peters and John Hildenbiddle voted on Super Bowl commercials by showing a thumbs up or thumbs down. Photo by Andrea Weare.**

This year Ad Club received a Public Relations Society of America Nebraska Paper Anvil award for best campus event for their annual Best and Worst Super Bowl commercial event 2019. The event included networking followed by comments from panelists on the 2019 Super Bowl commercials.

On average, students provide services for 10 to 12 clients a semester. Some of their services include social media management, media relations, video, photography and graphic design.

"The students get to experience a lot of different skills," says Karen Weber, a School of Communication lecturer and MaverickPR faculty adviser.

Weber says the firm's most notable clients consist of the Genius of Warren Buffett, Grief's Journey, Omaha Collegiate Consortium and Metropolitan Omaha Educational Consortium.

The Public Relations Student Society of America awarded MaverickPR Outstanding Firm in its annual national chapter awards. MaverickPR also earned Awards of Excellence from the Public Relations Society of America Nebraska chapter for its new website and Comfort Food Classic promotional videos.

Weber says this year, MaverickPR has become more integrated with its services and has expanded its client base to additional small business clients. More clients are asking for videos as part of their digital and social strategy. The firm is also taking on more branding and marketing projects.

"We have some really incredible and talented members who are going to do great things," says Nevada.

# UNO PRSSA preps students for future careers

By Hannah Asbury

The experience of being involved with a professional organization during the college years brings valuable skills for future careers.

“It helps with networking and finding new people, as well establishing your own network,” Maya Solarana, vice president of finance and diversity for the University of Nebraska at Omaha chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America.



**PRSSA 2020 Officers top back row (left to right): Mars Nevada, Kathy Nguyen, Okina Tran, Sarah Fixmer, Kathryn Lopez-Chavez, Kylie Squiers. Bottom row (left to right): Maya Solarana, Molly Trede, Karissa Madrigal, Karen Weber, Rachel Brader, Grant Rohan. Photo taken by Liz Rollin.**

“It helps you develop the professional skills you need to succeed,” Solarana she says.

PRSSA is a national pre-professional student organization that includes more than 9,000 students from 300-plus chapters across the U.S. and South America.

UNO PRSSA took home the national chapter award for outstanding student firm for the second time in three years at the 2019 PRSSA National Conference in San Diego. The chapter also earned a Star Chapter designation.

Karen Weber, PRSSA faculty adviser, says the significance of this award is major because the firm averages 15 to 20 members and serves 10 to 12 clients each semester.

During the conference, 10 students from UNO PRSSA participated in activities to improve skills and explore the profession in breakout sessions and agency tours.

In January 2020, the chapter earned 13 awards at the PRSA Nebraska Paper Anvil Awards. Among the awards was recognition for its community service such as the annual Santa Paws event that raised \$1,100 for Hearts United for Animals.

In March 2020, the chapter held a “Spring into Donation” drive for the MICA House emergency shelter that collected clothing, nonperishable food and hygiene products.

PRSSA sets up students for success in the future.

“The opportunities are there,” Solarana says. “It’s up to you to take advantage of those opportunities.”

# MavForensics team finishes 2019 in the top 10 again

By Jack Delperdang

They were there for more than just a good time.

For the second consecutive year, MavForensics finished sixth in the nation at the 2019 American Forensics Association National Individual Events Tournament in Alabama. The sixth place finish



**For the second consecutive year, MavForensics finished 6th in the nation at the American Forensics Association National Individual Events Tournament in Alabama. Photo submitted.**

extends its streak of finishing in the top 10 of the national rankings to an even 10. This achievement came on the heels of another Nebraska state championship.

“I don’t know that we have had a more talented group across so many different areas than this last one,” says Cameron Logsdon, lecturer and MavForensics assistant director.

For the eighth time in the last 10 years, Omaha has produced a National Champion in addition to the top 10 finish. This time, journalism and media communication student, now alumnus, Ameres Groves won in the prose interpretation division.

“We are extremely proud of him, one of the best competitors we have ever had,” Logsdon says, “but I wouldn’t have been surprised if any number of the students on the team had become national champion.”

UNO was also the only school in the country with two members on the All-American Forensics team.

The MavForensics team was looking for another Nebraska state championship win and to make nationals, in 2020. Those competitions were canceled due to the Corona virus pandemic.



## MavRadio finds continued success

By Blake Pfeil

Stories written and produced by the staff of MavRadio filled the airwaves for the entirety of the day ranging from pre-made stories to live in-studio interviews.

The goal of the broadcast was to celebrate radio by being entertaining and informative.

“They’re all volunteers, it’s just passion,” says Jodeanne Brownlee, faculty adviser for MavRadio.

When the clock transitioned to midnight on Oct. 4, 2019, MavRadio began an intimidating undertaking by performing a 24-hour-long radio broadcast to celebrate World College Radio Day.

MavRadio brought in guests including local Nebraskan musician Hakim, a rapper from Lincoln, and had a phone interview with nationally recognized rapper Futuristic, Brownlee says.

Along with the artists who were brought in, local professionals like Gary Sharp and Josh Peterson gave tips and guidance to MavRadio staff.

MavRadio has consistently received awards from distinguished organizations such as the Nebraska Broadcasters Association. Through the NBA, MavRadio has won awards for Best News

Story produced by Ulises Orozco, and Live Sports (TV) produced by DK Kellum, Matt Kirkle and Ellie Brecht. The students who won awards traveled to Las Vegas in August 2019 to receive their awards at an NBA conference.

“I’m proud of the growth of the students and have proven that we have talent here in Omaha, Nebraska compared to what’s across the state and country,” Brownlee says.



**The award winning MavRadio staff. Front row (Left to right): Rebecca Weis, Kerlin Cisneros, Stephanie Veloso. Middle row (Left to right): Justin Kies, Ashanti Allen, Shane Thomas Jack McGonigal, Erin Chance. Back row (Left to right): Jack Delperdang, Ben Helwig, Joey Colbert, William Danze, Corey Osborne, Chance Oliver, Connor Little, Phil Lemen, Danny Bolanos, Wyatt Waskowiak. Standing on the structure (Left to right): Aaron “Dende” Thomas, Ethan Wolbach, Matt Kirkle, Owen Godberson. Photo by Jodeane Brownlee.**

## UNO rolls out student-led broadcast with new opportunities

By Justin Kies

With the help of updated studio equipment and student volunteers, UNO TV’s debut of the Maverick Digital Network has made strides in student broadcasting and reporting.

Gary Repair, UNO TV’s executive producer, says he and his colleagues began discussing a student-run broadcast in the spring/summer of 2019. A few months later, Repair and company were ready for a “soft roll-out” of

Maverick Digital Network on the National Collegiate Hockey Conference TV network for the first time in October 2019.

“The technical aspect of interconnecting all the [equipment] was really quite a task,” Repair says.

This would not have been possible, he says, without a recent grant that has supplied the TV studio with HD cameras, replay equipment, video boards, etc. that help the TV crew run the broadcast. Students from various academic backgrounds volunteer for crew positions including anchors, camera operators, floor directors and more.

“We’d love to have more experiences made available for students who are interested,” Repair says.

Repair emphasized that the only limitations MDN has are its resources. Factors such as funding and student involvement are crucial for continuing the broadcast, but Repair says that a full-time producer is needed for MDN

to obtain its highest ceiling of production moving forward.

Proposals for the future include offering coverage to others sports like basketball, volleyball and baseball, in addition to hockey. But it doesn’t stop there—MDN was founded to cover UNO as a whole.

“The plan would be to not only have athletic offerings,” Repair says, “but academic endeavors as well.”

UNO has been nationally recognized for forensics and other academic competitions, but it also plays host to a number of keynote speakers throughout the year who may request broadcasting coverage. Repair could not expose upcoming negotiations or media contracts, but he insists the future is bright.

“Down the road and with the right amount of resources,” Repair says, “this could really just take off and be huge.”



**Maverick Digital Network host Matt Kirkle (left) and hockey analyst Phil Lemen (right) prior to addressing the National Collegiate Hockey Conference TV audience pre-game on Feb. 1, 2020. Photo by Jodeane Brownlee.**

# Outstanding communication studies undergraduate, a first-generation student, pursues dual degrees

By Claire Redinger

Keely Algya says she remembers sitting in a U.S. seminar course during her freshman year of college—every seat in the room



**Keely Algya, pursuing dual degrees in communication studies and international studies says being a first-generation student motivated her to “take advantage” of everything college has to offer. Photo submitted.**

except one, she says, was filled with another person like herself: a first-generation college student.

“We were all so scared and didn’t know what to expect, but by the end of the 45 minutes we’d all opened up about our fears – acknowledging it right away and setting goals,” Algya says. “I think that really helped steer me in the right direction. And, I still talk to those people about that specifically.”

Algya, from Plattsmouth, Nebraska, is pursuing dual degrees in communication studies and international studies and will graduate in May. She is the recipient of the 2020 Outstanding Communications Students Student award.

She traveled to Bulgaria in the fall of 2017 and spent the spring and summer of 2019 on two separate trips to Spain “trying to get that Spanish down” for her minor.

In addition to her time abroad, Algya says being a Buffett scholar in the Thompson Learning Community has been a formative part of her college experience, creating an “instant support group.” She says she looked up to the upperclassmen who served as mentors and decided to be a first-year mentor herself. Algya has also worked as a TLC event programmer and social media representative, desiring to work with international students.

“College is an experience,” she says. “Since I got fortunate enough to come, I wanted to take advantage of everything.”

After graduation, Algya says she plans to move out of state – bringing along her trusty companion dog Heath – and pursue her master’s degree.

## Ethan Wolbach, journalism and media communication student of the year

By Justin Kies

Ethan Wolbach graduated from Papillion-La Vista High School in 2015 with high hopes of playing collegiate baseball for Briar Cliff University in Sioux City, Iowa.

But after only a few weeks on campus at Briar Cliff, Wolbach says the start of his college career didn’t quite turn out the way he wanted.

“That [baseball] went south so I decided to take a more affordable option,” Wolbach says with a slight grin.

After reevaluating his options, Wolbach decided to move back to Omaha and enroll at Metropolitan Community College for a two-year program. Upon completion, Wolbach then brought his talents to the University of Nebraska at Omaha where he’s turned into a role model for other journalism and media communication students.

Enrolling at UNO was “the next best bet,” Wolbach says. After arriving on campus, he soon joined MavRadio, where he consistently broadcasts multiple UNO sporting events and runs social media accounts – providing scores, player

updates and game highlights. Wolbach says he’s always pushed himself to maintain good grades, but Professor Chris Allen, Ph.D., was the straw to break the camel’s back. Wolbach was urged by Allen to apply for what he simply called “an award,” and Wolbach obliged, not knowing what it fully entailed.

“Dr. Allen just came into the studio when we were filming The Omaha News and asked to talk to me in between segments,” Wolbach says.

“And I was thinking to myself, ‘Am I in trouble?’ Then he shook my hand and congratulated me on winning the Outstanding JMC Student of the Year, with a big ol’ smile on his face,” Wolbach says.

“And that put a huge smile on my face, because it’s always good to see someone genuinely happy for you,” Wolbach adds.

Wolbach says he will graduate in December, and then would like to further pursue a career in sports broadcasting. Currently, he works for the Omaha Beef, but as a life-long Chiefs fan he says the

goal is to end up somewhere in Kansas City, Missouri.

“It’d be cool to specifically cover the [Kansas City] Royals or the [Kansas City] Chiefs, but regardless of what happens I will be down there,” Wolbach says.



**Ethan Wolbach, 22, prepares for a sports broadcasting career post-graduation in December 2020, after receiving this year’s Outstanding Journalism & Media Communication Student of the Year Award. Photo submitted.**



## Outstanding graduate teaching assistant values collaboration

By Jimmy Carroll

Allegra Hardin, the 2020 School of Communication Outstanding Teaching Assistant, describes her graduate teaching assistant experience as being “very rewarding” while having the collaboration and cohesion with all the other GTAs, she says.

“I love the opportunity to work with students, learn teaching skills and appreciate being a student and a teacher,” Hardin says. “I want to take the skills and lessons from the classes and apply them in the classroom.”

Hardin has been a graduate teaching assistant since fall 2018 and her biggest accomplishment was presenting at a number of academic conferences. She will be attending her second Central States Communication Association Conference this spring.

These conferences have helped shape her career. Rhetorical criticism and theory is the main focus of Hardin’s work. There are three research methods associated with this: quantitative, qualitative and rhetorical analysis. She prefers rhetorical analysis with power, politics and identity.

“An aspect of my research I have completed was studying abandoned Disney photographs,” Hardin says. “This year I am



**Allegra Hardin says being a GTA is a wonderful opportunity to work on your own education, while developing some professional skills. Photo by Hayley Jurek.**

presenting information on anti-immigration websites and how they communicate identity.”

Hardin says her thesis is also something to talk about: how toys can communicate political identities.

“I want to thank the amazing faculty in the School of Communication because they are absolutely wonderful,” Hardin says. “Most of them leave their doors open for conversations and make it possible for students to ask questions and get the answers they need.”

## Outstanding graduate student is “all in”

By Claire Redinger

“I just knew—I knew that I wanted to be all in,” says Naomi Yanike, who decided to attend graduate school after 13 years of working in nonprofit and communication.

“I wanted to be a GTA because I knew it would give me access to all the right people and opportunities that I wouldn’t have if I were just kind of stopping in at night,” Yanike says.

“All in” seems to be a recurring theme with Yanike, a mother of three and the graduate teaching assistant for Media Writing Lecture.

For her graduate thesis “A qualitative study of multi-level marketing message strategies, hunzoning and the social costs on interpersonal relationships,” Yanike completely immersed herself in research. She says she went “down the rabbit hole,” as she listened to podcasts, joined Facebook groups, monitored Reddit threads, watched documentaries, read an extensive amount of literature and “tracked down” sources for her study.

“I could talk about this for hours—I’ve had so much fun,” Yanike says. “Something as a student I’ve come to realize, is that the sources I’m tracking down are real people, even researchers. So, I can call them and talk to them and ask them questions.”

As Yanike looks around the office space she shares with the other



**Outstanding Graduate Student Naomi Yanike says her newfound social and professional relationships and being a model for her children made pursuing her master’s degree “worth it.” Photo by Hayley Jurek.**

graduate teaching assistants, she says the desks beside hers are filled by “the right people.” With a laugh, she recalls how she did the first assignment of her graduate career wrong – but caught the mistake thanks to her peers.

“Things like that made it worth it. Taking a pay cut—the social and professional relationships made up the difference,” Yanike says. “And, I did my assignment right.”

“Having my kids see me do something I’ve wanted to do for a long time – that was my greatest reward,” she says.

After graduation, Yanike says she plans to pursue full-time work at a university.

# Outstanding graduate thesis sheds light on handling of grieving and bereaved students in primary classrooms

By Leta Lohrmeyer

Death, grief and bereavement aren't typically words that come to mind when thinking about teaching primary school students. Yet, it's a reality some must face.

Abby Surprenant who was selected by faculty as the 2019 Outstanding Thesis Award recipient, researched this reality and wrote it as her Graduate thesis: "Primary School Teachers and Their Privacy Management Toward Grieving and Bereaved Students: A Qualitative Analysis."

This study explored how primary school teachers handle and discuss death and loss with their students.

"In the research, we were conceptualizing death and loss," Surprenant says. "Not only is what you typically think of like the death of a significant person in someone's life like a parent, a peer or something like that, but also, thinking of loss more broadly in secondary losses."

Surprenant says she has always been interested in researching topics of death and grieving because it is "an inevitable experience in life" and, at the same time, "very difficult experiences."

When deciding what to focus her graduate thesis on, Surprenant chose this topic of death and bereavement in school, because her mother was facing it in her own classroom.



**Abby Surprenant is the 2019 Outstanding Thesis Award recipient.**

"Through those discussions with my mom about one student who died and since she has so many other experiences with students who were grieving," Surprenant says. "We talked about how she dealt with it and approached it, and so it's just kind of emerged as a very interesting context that are so common, but so impactful for a young child."

Through conducting research with Midwest primary school teachers, Surprenant found that not a single participant in the study was formally trained in handling situations of death and loss.

"The teachers really expressed that they're in such an important position to help grieving students and it's something they're very comfortable to do because they know they have a positive impact on the students," Surprenant says.

Surprenant's research is clear; even though this reality of loss exists in schools, there are teachers out who are ready to help handle that burden, she says.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

Graduate school....UNO's School of Communication offers a Master of Arts degree emphasizing a broad theoretical knowledge of speech and mass communication. Graduate students achieve in-depth understanding of communication processes and effects, acquiring the skills needed to conduct original research and grow professionally.

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# School of Communication scholarship recipients

The scholarships and awards were slated to be presented to outstanding students, alumni and communication professionals at the annual awards reception in April to celebrate the accomplishments of students and faculty during the past year. In March, the decision was made to cancel the event due to the Coronavirus guidelines that were issued.

**Albers Communications Group UNO Scholarship**

Ana Bellinghausen, Sarah Fixmer

**Fred and Mary Jo Petersen Communication Scholarship**

Rose McCaffrey

**Gunnar Horn Journalism Talent Scholarship**

Sophia Ridder, Isabella Zink

**Hartman Memorial Journalism Talent Scholarship**

Abbie Russman

**Hugh P. & Juliette L. Cowdin Communication Scholarship**

Zachary Gilbert, Hannah Rodricks

**Joe Henry Baker Memorial Scholarship**

Harrison Popp

**Kim Jones Passion Scholarship**

Karissa Madrigal

**Marcus Family Scholarship**

Claire Redinger

**O.P.C. Floyd Kalber Scholarship**

Owen Godberson

**O.P.C. Gautier Scholarship**

Ulises Orozco

**O.P.C. Howard Silber Scholarship**

Ethan Wolbach

**O.P.C. John Davis Scholarship**

Ana Bellinghausen

**O.P.C. NBA Scholarship**

Owen Godberson (nominated)

**O.P.C. Panko-Roberts/President's Memorial Scholarship**

Sarah Fixmer

**O.P.C. Paul N. Williams Scholarship**

Ulises Orozco

**O.P.C. Zorinsky Graduate Scholarship**

London Homer-Wambeam

**Paul & Fern Borge Communications Scholarship**

Matthew Denny

**Raf Czarnecki Legacy Scholarship**

Leta Lohrmeyer

**Sue Francke Memorial Scholarship**

Kylie Squiers

**Virginia Allen McIntire Scholarship**

Alyse Mancino, Katheryn Lopez-Chavez, Diana Munoz, Mikayla Dyell, Natalie Veloso, Faith Perrone, Taylor Shipley

## Class Notes

The School of Communication has brought back the Class Notes section of the CommUNO. The notes listed here were submitted in 2019. If you would like to send your update for the 2021 publication, complete the form on page 47.

### 1973

**DONNA GESS** used her bachelor's in music education to teach music for 24 years. She retired in 2001 and is living in Papillion, Nebraska.

### 1975

**KRISTIN GILGER** is the co-author of a new book, "There's No Crying in Newsrooms: What Women Have Learned About What it Takes to Lead." She is also senior associate dean at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University. Gilger graduated from UNO with a Bachelor of Arts in journalism, and later obtained her Master of Arts in mass communication from UNL.



### 1978

**NORM CRATTY** is enjoying retirement in rural Michigan after working in a variety of music and live entertainment productions in Chicago. After graduating from UNO with a Bachelor of Science in communication broadcast and production, Cratty helped artists and musicians in Chicago get into press, radio and television. Aside from working in communication, Cratty also spent the past 15 years performing in the annual production of a gospel titled, "Too Hot to Handel." The annual production took place in Chicago, Detroit, and Memphis, Tennessee.

### 1982

**GARY DI SILVESTRO** is using his Bachelor of Arts in journalism and political science to work independently as a political consultant in Omaha, Nebraska.

### 1988

**TOM THOMPSON** is currently the senior director of development at the University of Nebraska Foundation. Thompson's Bachelor of Science in communication has enabled him to work effectively within the community in fundraising efforts that have included mass media, cause marketing and

public relations. Over the past 17 years, Thompson's work has focused on philanthropic support for the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center, oncology related departments and divisions at University of Nebraska Medical Center and the department of dermatology.

### 1989

**CYDNEY KOUKOL** is the chief of communities at Talent Plus, Inc., a leading human capital and talent management consulting partner. Koukol is focused on Talent Plus's culture and global communities, as well as their candidate, colleague and community experience. "I'm intrigued with the power of one person understanding their potentiality, their impact on their team, the organization as a whole, and their life outside of work," Koukol writes. Prior to Talent Plus, Koukol utilized her Master of Arts in organizational communication to create First National Bank's first Retail Marketing department. Other notable career highlights include serving as an adjunct faculty member at UNO, working for 13 years as an independent communications strategist for clients and mentoring students in the JACHT program at UNL.

### 1992

**KENT WALTON** is a marketing communications specialist with Securities America, as well as a freelance writer. Walton obtained a Bachelor of Arts in journalism and writes that every day he utilizes the skills that he learned at UNO.

### 2002

**BRANDON COHEN** is currently an executive vice president of programming at iHeartMedia based out of New York City. Cohen's Bachelor of Arts in communication has enabled him to find success in the broadcast world. In addition to working in New York City, Cohen has also worked in radio, promotions and programming in many cities including Omaha, Nebraska; Eugene, Oregon; Spokane, Washington; and Seattle. Cohen spends nearly 150 nights a year on the road, going from market to market as a national programming lead for radio stations and air talent across America. Cohen has also helped launch and develop a syndicated top 40 morning show, which is now heard in over 50 markets





## 2003

**KRISTIN READ** is the assistant town manager of the Town of Castle Rock, Colorado. Read

first worked with the town in the Community Relations Division. Read now oversees the team that she once worked on. Read first obtained her bachelor's degree in journalism from UNO and then later obtained a Master of public administration from the University of Colorado Denver.

"I use the communication skills I fine-tuned while at UNO nearly every day," Read writes.



## 2007

**ASHLEE SCHUETTE COFFEY** graduated with a Bachelor of Science in journalism with a news editorial sequence. She works at the Omaha World-Herald as the editor of momaha.com, a parenting website. Coffey says, "Two of my UNO professors – Teresa Lamsam and Karen Weber – really helped to shape me as a journalist. They were fantastic teachers who had a lot of passion for the profession, which transferred to me." Coffey is planning on returning to UNO to get a degree in library science.

**FAITH CARRILLO DENTON** graduated with a Bachelor of Applied Science in public relations, advertising, and applied communication. Denton currently works at LinkedIn doing some event planning. "UNO really helped me build my confidence with Public Relations and Events Planning," Denton writes.

## 2009

**DAVID E. SMITH** graduated with a Bachelor in General Studies in communication. He retired in September 2012 as chief of the public affairs Operation Division, Headquarters Air Education and Training Command, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas. Smith has served as a communication committee chair for his church and currently serves as a director for their Walk to Emmaus Community. "Every opportunity that opens up for me gives me occasions to speak to audiences large and small...and to mentor others as they develop their skills," Smith writes. The caring instruction and mind-expanding opportunities Smith encountered at UNO have proven to be invaluable.

## 2010

**NICHOLE HENDRICKS BAUGH** graduated with a Bachelor of Science in communication studies. Baugh owns her own business in digital marketing, which has been successful now for four years. Baugh says, "Without my experience and education from UNO, this would not have been possible."

**AMY JACOBBERGER** graduated with a Bachelor of Science in communication with a concentration in journalism. Three days after graduating, Jacobberger started working at Redstone in Omaha as an account coordinator. She worked on the Nebraska Furniture Mart account and helped manage TV, radio and online campaigns. From there, Jacobberger worked as an account executive in Arizona. Jacobberger then moved to California in 2015 to follow her passion in event planning and production. She worked for PMK BNC for three years on the Samsung account producing experiential activations all over the world at cultural events, where she worked her way up to account supervisor. "UNO taught me very invaluable skills, one of which was always being adaptable and being able to think outside the box," she writes. Today she is working at RQ, a relationship agency focused on influencer marketing as an experiential expert.

## 2013

**DANIEL O'BYRNE** graduated with a Bachelor of Science in journalism. O'Byrne works in corporate communications at FedEx Supply Chain. O'Byrne writes: "I'm grateful to UNO for the opportunity it allowed me. It was a second chance to complete my degree after I paused at another institution to really figure out what I wanted to be doing."

## 2014

**MEREDITH AMELIA WHYE** graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in communication with a concentration in journalism. After UNO, Whye entered Teach for America in Kenya where she obtained a Master of Arts in Education. Whye continues her studies at Harvard for Graduate School of Education. Whye writes, "UNO taught me how to become involved in my university experience."

## 2015

**TYLER DAHLGREN** graduated with a Bachelor of Science in communication. Right after college he took a job as sports editor of the Washington County Pilot-Tribune where he worked for two years. He then moved to Lincoln to work as a communication specialist for the Nebraska Council of School Administrators. Dahlgren is the director of Nebraska Public School Advantage, an online storytelling outlet partnered closely with Nebraska Loves Public Schools. "I travel the state visiting schools and writing feature stories highlighting successes in our public schools and manage all social media," Dahlgren writes. Dahlgren is also a writer for the Nebraska Council of School Administration Today.

Awards continued from page 43

## School of Communication recognizes its alumni with top awards

By Ashly Willis

The School of Communication selected Kelsey Bugjo, Linyu Huang and Martha Bruckner as the three recipients to be honored at the annual awards event April 24, which was canceled due to the COVID-19 shut down. They will be officially recognized at the 2021 event.

Each individual has worked in diverse fields which contribute to their recognitions.



**Kelsey Bugjo** will receive the Alumni Achievement Award. She has worked for companies such as Clarkson College on its marketing campaigns having received many awards. She currently works at Omaha Steaks as the director of public relations and corporate communications.

In her role she had opportunities to work alongside many popular television shows but also some very familiar Omaha landscapes including the Joslyn Art Museum. Bugjo

says she is "inspired" by the work of past recipients and is honored to be among them.

## In Memoriam

**RUDY SMITH** passed away in December 2019 after being diagnosed with cancer. Smith was a photographer at the Omaha World-Herald for 45 years before retiring in 2008. He was a School of Communication Lifetime Achievement Award winner.

**MICHAEL SHERER, PH.D.** a former journalism professor at UNO, passed away in January 2020. Sherer taught topics including film theory and criticism, media ethics, media law and photography.

**JEAN ELKON** passed away in January 2020. Elkon worked as an instructor in the communication department for 21 years before retiring in September 1991.



**Martha Bruckner** will receive the Lifetime Achievement Award for her continued interest in working in educational departments within her current role as the executive director at the Metropolitan Omaha Education Consortium which provides students in the Omaha-Council Bluffs area with exceptional education through various programs.

She gives thanks to the School of Communication and the College of Education as they created a tremendous impact on her life, "I am always appreciative of the gifts that I have been given through UNO associations," Bruckner says.



**Linyu Huang** will receive the Rising Star Award. Linyu works as a social media channel leader for the Chinese-American shopping company Dealmoon. Her company uses its customer service platforms Weibo and WeChat to gain followers on social media to better serve its customers and the community. WeChat, she says, has gained much success internationally with it being ranked among the best 200 as the largest social media platform in China.

She is currently working on a project which deals with the information gap between the United States and China with those affected by the Coronavirus to be able to tell their stories across international borders. Giving special thanks to School of Communication professors, Joy Chao, Ph.D., Karen Weber and Jeremy Lipschultz, Ph.D., she says they, "have given me their trust and encouragement to keep moving forward in my career."



# What are you doing? Comm UNO wants to know!

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ Previous Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

When did you graduate from UNO?

Undergraduate and Graduate (circle)

Provide a brief update of what you've been doing since graduation:

High resolution photos accepted with your update.

**Email Melodae Morris, CommUNO adviser, at [melodaemorris@unomaha.edu](mailto:melodaemorris@unomaha.edu) or mail to:  
University of Nebraska at Omaha  
Arts and Sciences Hall 107T  
6001 Dodge Street  
Omaha, NE 68182-0112**

Note: if you are going to be in the area (or already are) and would like to share your experience and expertise with students, the School of Communication would love to have you as a guest in the classroom. Please contact us!

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